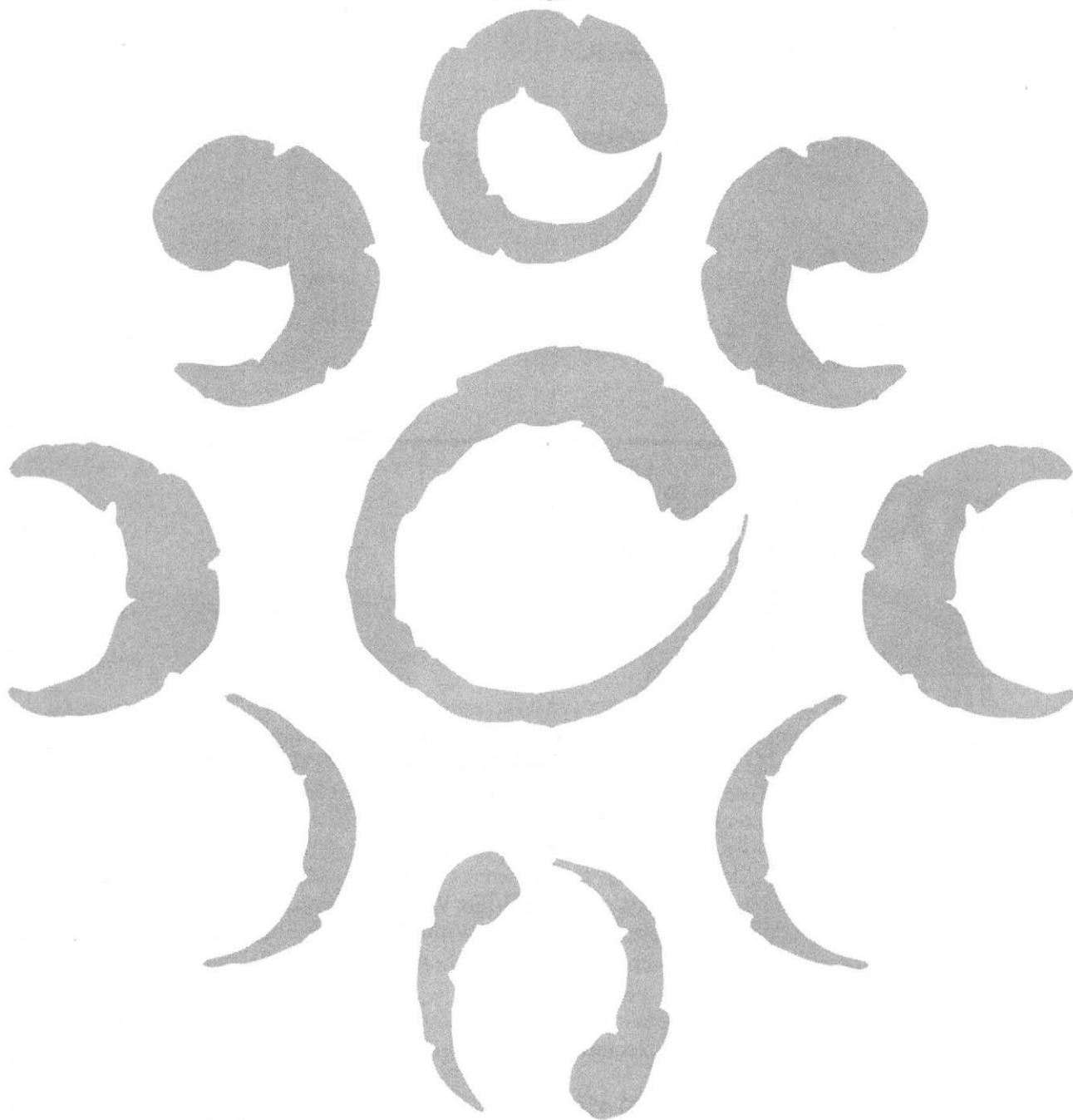


# BOOK OF AUSPICES



A Character Sourcebook for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™

# BOOK OF AUSPICES™



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WEREWOLF CREATED BY MARK REIN•HAGEN

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## Special Dedication

To Jessica Hanna, great gamer and greater friend. We will always miss you, Heather, and Benjamin.



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<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN CANADA.

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## Four out of Five

"Anyway, that's the deal. The tribe is willing to sponsor us — and by 'sponsor,' I mean 'give us lots of money' — if we agree." He taps the ash off his cigarette, and gives me that tight-lipped smile again. I have no idea how he does it — the guy manages an ear-to-ear grin without parting his lips. It's grotesque.

I fan the smoke away and look out the window. I'm really considering his offer, and it's not the money. Hell, I make enough money — my fall line's doing really well. It's the notion of joining a pack. I miss it. And with the tribe's sponsorship, we could probably travel. That'd be a nice perk — one of the many reasons I've been gun-shy about joining a new pack is that I'm nervous about getting tied down to one sept.

He doesn't let up. "It'd be great, Corina. We'd be about the only uni-tribal pack operating anywhere in the country. I've heard on the down-low from sept leaders in four different cities that they'd be very keen on having us visit, help out," he pauses for effect, "share stories."

Bastard.

I never got to tell stories much in my old pack. Don't know why. Probably because we were based out

of the Valkenberg Foundation, not a caern, so we didn't have a monthly moot, which meant no fixed time to howl at the moon.

"So who all would it be?" He lights up at the question.

"It'd be me, you, Jack — you know, the herbalist guy — and Rowe."

Something's wrong here.

"That's only four, Elton." He shrugs. "No, I mean that's not a complete pack." I hold up five fingers. "I'm a Galliard, you're a Ragabash, Jack's a Theurge, and Rowe's a Philodox. So where's our full-moon?" My middle finger's the only one left up, but he doesn't notice.

Elton stubs out his cigarette. "Well, we did have a line on this one kid but he got killed defending a caern outside Phoenix. Tough break, but I really think we could go ahead without an Ahroun." He smirks. "Not like we don't *all* know how to fight, right?"

I shake my head. "Yeah, that's pretty much what we said, too, and it almost got us all killed. 'Not like we *all* don't know the Litany.' Christ in a cartoon."

"What are you talking about, Corina?"

I stand up and grab a bottle of water out of his fridge. My voice isn't used to speeches, which is damned embarrassing.

"Let me tell you a story."

• • •

"All right, folks, listen up." Zoe McKenna walked from the main compound at Valkenberg. The rest of her pack sat under an awning in the shade. Corina and Steven were playing war, with Lysistrata looking on and trying to figure out the rules.

Zoe handed a photograph of a Japanese man to Corina. "How's your Japanese?"

"Skoshi," she responded. Zoe nodded.

"Good. Guy we're looking for is Hiro Natsuko. Software engineer in Seattle." Steven grinned — Seattle was his hometown. "There's a sept there called Stone Skies. Mostly Glass Walkers and some Shadow Lords, I guess. We can't moon bridge in — they're cautious about using the bridge except in emergencies — but they said we can crash there."

Lysistrata rested her chin on Steven's lap. "We know he's Garou?"

Zoe mopped her brow — even in the shade, the Wyoming heat was oppressive. "Yeah, pretty sure. Report from a Bone Gnawer Kin snoop. Poor guy saw Hiro walk out to his car, and then turn and start chasing after a guy walking his dog. Said he was running on all fours, but didn't get any farther than Glabro form."

"Well, that's a mercy." Steven stretched. "So he's still functional? Still going to work?"

"Yeah, evidently he's not as far gone as that first Lunatic we chased." She nudged Corina with a toe. "Say something, girl."

Corina stood up. "You know what I'm going to say. It feels weird, only four of us."

"What moon lost cub?" Lysistrata again, now sitting on her haunches to look up at her packmates.

"Don't know, Lys," answered Zoe. "Maybe he's a half-moon, and we can make Corina feel better." She pulled her hair back and tied it with a bandana. "Either way, let's get moving. Our plane leaves in about three hours."

• • •

"So you only had four then, too?" He's lit up another cigarette. I nod. I thought I made that pretty clear.

"Yeah, we were missing a Philodox. The Valkenberg Foundation can't afford to be choosy. I'm not even sure if they currently have a Questing Pack, let alone whether they've got five."

"So did you find this Hiro guy?"

I look out the window uncomfortably. "Yeah, we did."

• • •

The plane arrived without incident. They rode to the caern in the rented van, Zoe driving, Corina riding shotgun brushing up on her Japanese, Steven and Lysistrata wrestling playfully in the back seat. They crossed the bawn into the Sept of the Stone Skies shortly after sundown, and Corina dialed a number on her cell phone.

"Yes?"

She strained to remember the proper method of introduction. Most Glass Walker septs weren't too formal, but this one had a sizable Shadow Lord contingent. Why hadn't she bothered to learn these rules?

"Umm...hi. We're the Questing Pack. This is Corina Blaine."

An exasperated sigh. She'd forgotten something.

"The Questing Pack from the Sept of...well, not really from a sept, we're from Valk—"

"This is Strider-of-Darkness, an Ahroun of the Shadow Lords and Guardian of the Sept of the Stone Skies. And you are?" Corina felt humiliation rise in her gut and turn to rage. She should have known what he'd wanted.

"Fangs-on-the-Cutting-Edge, Galliard of the Glass Walkers and member of the Questing Pack."

Another long-suffering sigh. "Where is your alpha?"

"Driving," snapped Corina. Zoe glanced over sharply.

Silence for a moment, then the voice told them to turn into a parking structure on the next corner. Corina swung the van left and down a ramp. They parked on the lowest level, no other cars in sight. The four of them piled out of the van and looked about. Corina tried the cell again, but got only static.

"Well, now what?" Zoe asked.

"I don't know," replied Corina helplessly. He didn't tell me. Was he supposed to? she thought.

The air shimmered, and a young man appeared from the Umbra. He looked about twenty, and had his sleeves rolled up to prominently display the scars on his shoulders. He looked the pack up and down and then asked who the alpha was.

Zoe stepped forward. "Me. Zoe McKenna." The ordinary-sounding name didn't go over well. Zoe had a Garou name, of course, but rarely used it.

"All right, Zoe, you and your pack follow me. The sept leader wants to talk with you."

They walked up the ramp and across the street. Lysistrata hung on Steven's shoulder, frightened of the city but marveling at the new perspectives that Homid form granted. Zoe chatted with "Strider-of-Darkness," trying to get him out of his stone-faced Guardian mode. Corina tried to remember the proper methods of greeting. Shouldn't it be Zoe's job?

The Guardian led them into a nondescript office building to an elevator. He and Zoe were talking now, comparing notes on the best way to do maximum damage to an opponent without changing out of Lupus. Lysistrata perked up a couple of times, but had too much trouble following the English conversation and instead started humming along with the elevator music. The doors opened, and revealed several werewolves in a comfortable-looking lounge.

One — a blonde woman wearing a violet business suit — stood up and walked over to them. Their escort remained on the elevator, and the Questing Pack stood uncomfortably, feeling rather like intruders. Steven cocked his head as though straining to hear a faint sound. They had crossed a bawn somewhere between here and the street.

The blonde woman looked them up and down and waited. Zoe and Corina eyed each other nervously, and then both stepped forward simultaneously. Corina stepped back.

"Thank you for your hospitality." Corina could tell Zoe was trying not to laugh. Formality made the Ahroun contemptuous and nervous. "I'm Zo...er, Brigid's Noble Soul, an Ahroun of the Fianna and alpha of the Questing Pack." She paused. No response from the blonde woman. Corina silently willed her alpha not to say anything stupid.

It didn't work. Zoe reached up and waved her hand in front of the blonde werewolf. "Hello?"

The woman took a step back and curled her lips in a snarl. "Hello, cubs. Pity there aren't any half-moons at Valkenberg." Damn, Corina thought, what did we forget? The woman continued. "I am Wanda Udin, or Killer's Eye, if you must. I'm an Ahroun. Glass Walker. And I'm the Warder of this caern." She looked each of them up and down. "For future reference, we'd really prefer people in business dress here. When we get visitors looking like you do, it looks strange. If the Leeches have agents watching our buildings, a pack of people showing up in jeans and fatigues look...out of place." She paused at Corina, who was the only member of the pack in business dress. "You're Corina Blaine, aren't you?"

Corina nodded. "Yes, that's me. Or 'Fangs-on-the-Cutting-Edge', if you like."

Wanda smirked. "I love your work."

Corina smiled back. "Thanks. I actually designed that top." Zoe shot Corina a glance — the Ahroun gave her no end of grief about her profession and the amount of time and effort it required. All four members of the Questing Pack had undergone their First Changes relatively late in life, and been entrenched in careers, school, or (in Lysistrata's case) just living life when they were called to Gaia's service. Corina had simply been unwilling to let her old life go — even with all the hazards walking among humans entailed.

Wanda gestured across the room. "Have coffee or something if you'd like. Jules will be in shortly."

• • •

"Jules?"

Elton's listening, but not raptly. I decide to skip ahead a bit. "Yeah. He was a Shadow Lord, so we're all expecting him to be oily and just generally a dick. He was a really nice guy, though. Gave the others some shit about the way we were dressed and a little lecture about proper introduction procedures, but joked about it."

"Yeah, so what? I mean, sounds like the fact that you guys didn't have a Philodox didn't much hurt you. So you lost a little face for being underdressed, who cares?"

I sigh. "It got worse. We stayed the night at the sept — we didn't get to visit the caern, which was kind of a disappointment, but they didn't trust us enough. In the morning, we went out and decided to scope out Natsuko's office, and then grab him when we left that night. It would have been so much easier with a Philodox to confirm that he really *was* Garou."

Elton cocks his head. "Thought you could do that."

I sip my water. My throat's getting sore. "I can now. This was the second assignment we'd had as a pack. I had to go on a whole spirit quest to learn that Gift, and it took me a full month." I smile at the memory. That little spirit really put me through the wringer, but it was worth it. "I left on that quest right after we got back to the Foundation."

"With Natsuko?"

"You want to hear the rest of this story?"

"Yeah, sorry. Go ahead."

• • •

The corporation Natsuko worked for was housed in a small business park on the outskirts of Seattle. Steven knew the area well, so Zoe let him drive, but looked out the window and occasionally moaned. She got carsick easily.

Corina sat in the back seat and watched the little chunk of glass tied to the rear-view mirror spinning,

catching the sunlight. It pointed towards Hiro Natsuko, thanks to Steven's skill with rites. The van pulled into the business park and the glass shard pointed straight at the door. "Well," said Steven, "looks like he's in the office."

Zoe opened the door. That made Corina nervous — Zoe was impetuous on her best day. "Where are you going?"

The pack's alpha pulled her hair back and tied her ever-present bandana around it, a sure signal that she was preparing for action. "I'm going to go have a word with him."

Corina opened the door and stepped out in front of the Ahroun. "Zoe, are you nuts? Remember what happened last time? We had to chase that poor wolf over three miles because she could sense that we were different somehow. Suppose the guy goes berserk?"

Zoe grinned. "Film at eleven."

Corina glanced helplessly into the van. Steven was looking on, but Corina knew he wouldn't say anything. He hated confrontation. Lysistrata didn't have any real idea of the implications of what Zoe was suggesting. *I'm on my own here, I guess.* Corina searched her mind for a story or a parable about going off half-cocked, but came up blank. "You just can't go in there like—"

"Can, too. Much quicker that way. I'll just have him come out here to talk with us. We can take him down if we need to."

Corina glanced around the parking lot. She didn't see anyone walking around, but it was early yet. "Damn it, Zoe, this guy's not out of control if he's still going to work. He's probably just as scared as we were." She hit on inspiration. "Remember you told me about the time you went nuts in a grocery store and started chowing down on a side of beef in a meat locker?"

Zoe blushed and Corina noticed her eyebrows suddenly looked darker and thicker. *Oops. That may have been the wrong thing to say.* "You going to step out of the way, Corina?" The voice had a distinct rumble to it. Zoe was close to the edge.

Corina swallowed hard. "No. You're going to put us all in danger." Lysistrata, sensing the tension between them, jumped out of the van and sat in Lupus form, looking back and forth between them. Steven unbuckled his seat belt and sat there, nervously, eyeing the mirror.

"Fine." Zoe lashed out and Corina was on the ground gasping for breath. She fought the rage rising up within her, but heard seams break as she changed to Glabro. Zoe, of course, took that as a further challenge. She set a jackboot into Corina's ribs. The pain sub-

sided quickly enough — Zoe was still in Homid form and wasn't really trying to hurt her packmate — but Corina was having trouble staying in control. She knew she could either try to get up, which Zoe would take as a challenge, or submit, which meant that matter was closed.

Corina felt her teeth elongate and her muscles tense. *Damn it, keep it together,* she thought. Zoe could probably kill her, and even if it didn't get to that point, the brawl would attract attention. She counted to ten, and sat pushed herself up to a kneeling position. Zoe reached back with a closed fist, but Corina instinctively stretched her throat upwards. Zoe relaxed. "Done now?"

Corina stood up. "You started this. But if you want to just go stomping in there, OK, it's your show. But I'm not going in there in this form."

"Why the hell not?"

The Glass Walker gestured towards her clothes. "Because I'm a moderately famous person, that's why. Somebody recognizes me, I'll lose my career, and frankly, I don't feel like losing it just because —" she stopped herself. Zoe didn't wait for her to finish.

"Fine. Tell you what. Lys, Steven, go in through the Umbra and see if you can find the guy. Corina, wait here in the van. I'm going in there to see if I can pick him out."

Lysistrata jumped into the van and rested her chin on Steven's leg. A moment later, they vanished. Zoe looked at Corina. "Just keep a lookout. Think you can handle that?" Corina didn't bother answering; she just slammed the van door. Zoe turned and walked into the building.

Corina sat in the front seat of the van, staring at herself in the rearview mirror. The rage had passed and now she just felt bitter. She had a feeling she was wrong, that she should have just gone along with Zoe's plan (such as it was) from the get-go, but couldn't place why. She shifted uncomfortably in her seat, wishing that Steven had parked the van facing the door. She reached for the keys and found they were gone; Steven must have pocketed them.

She considered peeking into the Umbra, just to see if she could figure out where Lysistrata and Steven were, but she didn't bother. She pulled out a planner and looked over her meetings for the next week — New York by Thursday, damn it. She thought about the fall line and how little work she'd put into it. Every time she tried to sketch clothes, she saw fur and blood. She'd become too much a werewolf.

Corina smirked ruefully and touched up her makeup. She wished for some story, some parable that



would help this make some sense, but all of the stories she knew took place thousands of years ago. It wasn't so bad among other Glass Walkers, but she'd only met one Galliard from her own tribe and he'd had a real "urban primitive" schtick. She couldn't relate.

The van shifted suddenly as Lysistrata appeared from the Umbra. "Trouble," she growled.

Corina turned around in the seat. "What happened?"

"Lost brother fears us. Locked himself in a cave. Everyone yelling."

Corina slapped a hand to her forehead. "Great." Sure enough, the door into the office opened and people began filing out. A moment later, Steven appeared in the van.

"That didn't go exactly as planned."

"No shit," muttered Corina. "Now what?"

"Wait for Zoe, I guess. She went up to him, asked him all flirty-like to come outside and talk with her, and he panicked. Ran right for a storage closet and locked himself in, and started screaming in Japanese." Steven nodded at the people now clustered around the windows, looking in excitedly. "They kept talking about him going postal. Police are probably on their way already — everybody's paranoid about office shootings."

"Yeah, well, this could get worse than a shooting. Shit!" Corina banged the steering wheel in frustration. Zoe might still be in the building... but might not be. Even so, Natsuko had obviously reacted poorly to her (Zoe evidently hadn't clued in to the effect her rage had on people) and might panic — or worse — if she confronted him again. Corina stood up. "I'm going in."

Lysistrata looked at her nervously. "Alpha still inside?"

Corina shrugged. "Doesn't matter. If this guy's panicking, I might be able to talk him down. I don't freak people out as much as Zoe and I speak some Japanese, and besides, I fit in a little better than you guys do." She got out of the van and walked towards the knot of people.

The employees watched her as she approached the door, but no one had the courage to say anything. She pulled it open, and found herself face to face with a young man carrying a mug that read "Black Dog Game Factory." He looked up at her and blushed, and pointed towards the back of the office. "There's a guy...and...I think—"

"It's OK," said Corina. "I'm going to try to talk to him. I speak Japanese." The man smiled, nervously, then ducked by her and out the door. Poor geek, she thought.

The office was a maze of cubicles, not quite tall enough to obstruct her vision. She noticed that a couple of the cube walls had been knocked over, and papers and office junk strewn about. *This must be where Zoe found him.* She wondered where her alpha had gone.

A sudden shout snapped her to attention. She followed the sound to the back of the office and found a door marked "Supplies." Someone behind it was screaming in broken Japanese. Corina couldn't catch much, but what she did understand didn't surprise her. The man was screaming about "monsters" and "night." If the guy wasn't a Lunatic werewolf, he certainly acted the part.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

Corina turned to find Zoe behind her. She had lost her shirt and her fatigues, and stood there in her bandana, a sports bra, and a pair of boots. She looked ridiculous. "Where are your clothes?"

"Had to change forms and lost 'em. They're around her somewhere. Answer me."

"How's your Japanese? I figured I'd have a better chance of talking him down than you."

Zoe rolled her eyes. "Nice to think of that now. Thought you didn't want to be recognized."

The growl left Corina's throat before she could stop it. "All right, enough. Don't we have better things to do?"

Zoe nodded towards the closet. "Be my guest."

Corina knocked softly. "Hiro-san? Mr. Natsuko?" A series of thuds, as though he was kicking the door repeatedly. "We're here to help."

"Hell with this," hissed Zoe. "Let's just kick in the door, grab him, and step sideways."

"You ever tried it with a Lunatic?" Corina didn't bother turning around to ask the question.

"No."

"Then how do you know it would work?"

"Shit, I don't know." Zoe kicked a chair over. "Just a guess. Who's supposed to know about this stuff?"

Corina didn't bother to answer. She was thinking about her own First Change. "Listen, somebody tried the direct approach with me my first time, too. It was my father. I ever tell you what happened to him?"

"We don't have time for a story, Corina."

"Just listen. He tried to be all 'modern parent' with me and it just made me mad. When he spoke to me like my *father*, like he was trying to intimidate me, I backed down. That's probably why he's still alive, poor guy."

"OK, I got it." Zoe banged on the door. "Hiro! Come on out! We're here to help, but we don't have

much time before—" She didn't get a chance to finish before the door exploded outwards, flinging Zoe backward into a set of cubicle walls. Hiro strode out of the closet, now in Crinos form. His fur was jet black and his chest broad, but he moved with a grace that Corina had never seen from a werewolf. He turned to the Glass Walker and bared his fangs in challenge. Oh, God, she thought. *He must think I'm prey or a mate or something. He's going on pure instinct. What the hell do I do?*

A feral roar from the other side of the office decided it. Zoe burst from the collapsed cube walls wearing the Hispo, and slammed into the Lunatic's body. She knocked him down and grabbed his neck with her jaws.

Corina heard sirens. Frantically, she spoke in Garou. "Zoe, we've got to get out of here!"

Hiro understood the language, if not the meaning. However, that realization seemed to frighten him even more. He planted his palms on the ground and pushed up. Zoe, surprised and distracted by her packmate, released her jaws. Hiro backed up and bared his fangs to both of them.

"Thanks a lot," snarled Zoe. The Gauntlet rippled, and Steven and Lysistrata stood beside their packmates. Lysistrata whined; the sirens made her uncomfortable. Steven looked over his shoulder at the people gaping in the windows. They probably couldn't see clearly enough to register what was happening, but the local news would certainly have some wild stories.

Corina hissed sharply in Garou. "Lysistrata, your Gift. Calm him down." The Black Fury glanced up at her packmate and then to her alpha for approval. Zoe nodded, and crept around as though flanking Hiro.

The Lunatic followed the most obvious threat, and for one second, turned his back on Lysistrata. She darted forward and put one paw on his flank. Corina watched his expression change from fear and rage to serenity, but knew it wouldn't last long. She stepped forward and put a hand on his massive shoulder.

She spoke to him quietly, in Japanese, trying to comfort him. Zoe backed off a bit, and then changed back to human form to confer with Steven. Lysistrata whined urgently. "Cars coming."

Corina leaned in to Hiro's chest, knowing that while in Homid form, he could kill her with one bite. In Garou, soothingly, she said, "Change back, Hiro. Just relax your body and change back."

"Footsteps coming now," growled Lysistrata. Zoe stepped forward.

"We've got to get going. Leave the Lunatic if he can't follow; we'll pick him up later in an asylum or something."

Corina stayed calm, but shot her alpha a glare. "We don't leave each other behind."

"Since when is that part of the Litany?"

Corina scoffed. "Can you recite it?"

"Litany?" The Garou turned to look at Hiro. He was standing, naked, in Homid form. His face was flushed with shame and he was trembling. *One scare and he's right back in frenzy*, thought Corina.

Zoe looked at her pack. "All right, let's hope this works. Lys, get these guys out of here. Steven, try your best to get the cub into the Umbra — maybe your pet unicorn can help." Steven bristled, but didn't answer. "I'm going to hold the police off."

Corina shook her head. The police didn't need to be held off; if the Questing Pack could disappear into the Umbra, they could make their way to the Sept of the Stone Skies. Zoe wasn't thinking about the pack or their safety, she was just burning off steam. But Steven and Lysistrata were already vanishing, Steven holding onto the frightened Lunatic's hand and murmuring softly to him.

"Zoe!" Corina didn't know what she'd say, she'd just have to improvise.

"What?" The Ahroun didn't bother to turn.

"Leave the cops alone."

Zoe cocked her head, and slowly turned around. "You challenging me again?"

"No. I'm telling you. Leave them alone. We can just leave."

From outside, a cop's voice, amplified by a bullhorn, made them both start. "We're coming in. Throw down your weapons." Wonder what the hell they were told, thought Corina.

Zoe looked her packmate up and down. "Why should I?"

Inspiration struck. "I'll tell you why. Remember what Victor told us before we left? About that other Questing Pack and how they went around just relying on the Veil, and then that fucking Shadow Lord guy came out of nowhere when they were in New England and put them all on trial for breaching the Veil? It's against the fucking Litany, Zoe. And it still applies to us. Especially to us. We're setting an example for these guys." She gestured outside.

Zoe took a deep breath, and then extended her hand. "Better believe we'll take this up later." Corina didn't answer, just gripped her alpha's hand and pushed herself through the Gauntlet.

• • •

I down the last of the water. Elton looks at me. A lot of Galliards I've seen take these dramatic pauses at the ends of their stories, before telling the "punch

line." Some claim it's to heighten dramatic tension, but really, it's to wet the whistle.

He prompts me before I start talking again. Rude, but then we're just chatting here. "So what happened?"

"Well, turned out Hiro was a Shadow Lord — a Hakken, one of the Eastern guys. After we brought him back, his Kin in Japan were fighting over him with the Lords in Seattle. He stayed at the Foundation for a while, then moved to Kyoto, I think."

"What'd the police say about the office?"

I shrug. "Don't know. I didn't look. The Sept of the Stone Skies wasn't real happy with us, obviously, so we didn't follow up. I'm pretty sure that if there had been any major problems, we'd have heard about it."

He leans forward. "OK, here's the thing. I understand that you guys had problems because you didn't have a Philodox, but you did all right for it. I mean, say what you want, but you really did know the Litany—"

"You are missing the point," I say. I'm really not much of a storyteller. I'd rather do multi-media stuff to tell stories, which of course limits my appeal outside my tribe. "We came within a hair's breadth of killing each other. If the cops had seen us, or if Zoe and I had really gotten into it, who knows what would have happened? But if we'd had someone with us who knew the Litany, someone who'd been trained in it, we'd have been fine, because he would have quoted it and nobody would have had to back down. It's an important job. All the auspices have important jobs." I'm getting annoyed now. Elton still has this patronizing smile on his face and I don't know if he's doing it deliberately or not.

"I know we do. Mine's to question stuff, yeah? Make sure that tradition's not dragging us down, and I don't see why, with a pack of professionals, we need an Ahroun."

I counter that immediately. "Who'd lead us? Who'd inspire us? I mean, I can do it with a little time and the right equipment, but not in a pinch. What happens when our pack gets jumped by some Dancers or something and we need to think fast? It's not enough that we've all been in packs before, because none of the four of us were chosen by Luna to be Spirit Warriors. It could mean someone gets hurt, or killed, and I'm not willing to test my luck on that anymore."

Elton's patronizing look is gone. He looks like he's considering what I'm saying, which is good. I take a breath. I'm feeling a little wound up; guess I was getting a little heated about the whole thing.

"Well, answer me this, then," he says. "What happens when the Apocalypse finally comes, and everybody says, 'It's not my job'?"

I don't have an answer for that, damn it.



# Introduction: Beloved of Luna

*It is the very error of the moon;  
She comes more near the earth than she was wont,  
And makes men mad.*

— William Shakespeare, *Othello*

## *What is an Auspice?*

It's a lot more than just a career choice or clique, to start with. Auspice affects every aspect of a Garou's life; it has a deep and subtle impact on who he is and why. Auspices determine not only the way a Garou will be viewed in the Nation, but also how he will interact with the world around him. As with the vampires' clans and mages' Traditions, the standard disclaimer should be put in place that a Garou is not defined by his auspice, and players should not expect every Galliard to be a merry minstrel or every Ahroun a blood-soaked berserker. Garou are individuals, and their personal nature transcends the rote combination of breed, tribe and auspice that is listed on the character sheet.

In this case, however, we should balance this with a disclaimer in the other direction: *Auspice matters*. A lot. An auspice is not just a stereotype, or a social grouping the werewolves devised among themselves. Auspices have mystical, spiritual and psychological dimensions that impact a Garou's character, and the difference in perspective, the uniqueness of each auspice's perspective and the common traits they share. Players should thus be encouraged to explore the archetype rather than either shredding or slavishly following the stereotype — there's more perversity

than creativity in a wholly pacifist Ahroun or a Galliard who could care less about stories and history.

Since auspices aren't just social groups, what exactly are they? They can be compared to certain real-life social systems (such as India's caste system), but such comparisons almost always fall short. Castes try to force individuals into specific roles, whereas auspices involve individuals being born with mystically dictated suitability for a given task or social position. Because of the mystical component and spirit ties an auspice represents, there is literally nothing quite like it in our real world, and auspices cannot be properly judged in the same fashion as we would judge any real life institution. Certainly, they might seem harshly restrictive to modern sensibilities—and many young Garou from urban tribes like the Glass Walkers voice just that sentiment: that the system is outdated and needs to be liberalized. But while some Garou may feel that auspices are restrictive in the abstract, very few indeed truly feel that they personally are unsuited to the role Luna has appointed them. It resonates with their being in a way they are unable to articulate rationally, and most Garou feel thankful to have a niche where they can find genuine fulfillment rather

than angry at being forced into a role they don't belong in. Indeed, the very point of an auspice is that by mystical decree it is the one role in life that it the most natural and fulfilling to the being that possesses it. The stars and birth cycles never make mistakes.

An important side effect of this is that unless there is some deeply unnatural factor present in the situation (such as mental illness, Wyrm taint or catastrophic suffering) a Garou can eventually find true fulfillment by carrying out the duties of her auspice. It is literally the purpose she was created for, and nothing in the universe will bring her as deep satisfaction and justified pride as being exemplary of her moon sign.

An *auspice* is a profession. It certainly isn't "only" a profession, but this is as good a mundane starting point as any. If a tribe is comparable to real-life ethnicity, then auspice matches closely with career choice. Like engineers, teachers or policemen, members of an auspice share a trade and a common body of skills, and this gives them a certain camaraderie and understanding with others of their ilk. A Garou needs training in her early years to fulfill the role that her auspice sets before her; while some particularly nationalistic tribes break this mold, in general cubs receive most of their training grouped by auspice, not tribe. A Galliard must learn legends, an Ahroun must master every aspect of war-craft and a Theurge must learn the etiquette of the spirit worlds.

An *auspice* is a mindset. Because the duty it entails is so all consuming, a Garou's moon sign colors how she looks at the world. To an Ahroun, the world is made of things that pose a threat to Gaia, the caern, her pack and herself; the Theurge instead sees the world as a series of mysteries to be explored, contemplated, understood and ultimately exploited. Galliards, with their study of legendary tales, begin to see the world itself as a living, changing story while Philodox see what is set before them in terms of duty, justice and reverence. This is not to say that auspices by necessity impose solipsistic tunnel vision on the Garou — just the opposite, in fact. By having a defined perspective on the world and a fixed understanding of one's place in it, the Garou gain a greater facility for balanced judgment and effective action than they would have with a more individualistic culture of self-definition. Admittedly, sometimes this judgment basically amounts to turning a problem over to the experts — a Galliard will usually find a Theurge when confronted with a spirit mystery — but the fact still remains that auspices are one of the things that have allowed them to survive as tenaciously as they have.

An *auspice* is an obligation. Garou have deeply personal ties to their pack or sept totem, but their ties to Luna, while more communal, are every bit as strong. The moon itself is a deeply evocative image for Garou — it not only replenishes their Rage; it reaffirms their place in the universe, gives them the strength to continue fighting in a wasteland world and symbolizes their own mercurial, changing nature. If Gaia is a raised-up idol, the immaculate virgin whose banner the Garou fight under, then Luna is like a noble liege,

nurturing godparent and passionate lover all rolled into one. Werewolves feel an incredible kinship with and devotion to her, and the simple, objective truth is that while totems give a few useful Gifts along with a minor ban, Luna has given the Garou the very essence of their nature: shapeshifting, Rage and all the powers of auspice.

### *Changing Auspice*

The mechanical aspects of changing one's auspice are discussed under the Rite of Renunciation (**Werewolf**, pg. 157), but the social implications of doing so should be examined in a little more depth. Predestination is an objective reality for the Garou, and rejecting the auspice that astrology grants to a Garou is essentially second-guessing Gaia and Luna's intent. Of course, there are many reasons why a werewolf might want to do this — astrology aside, the Garou are still free-willed beings who develop over time and change in accord with their experiences. An auspice can become a burden, a dead weight around the Garou's neck dragging him into suffering, bitterness and ultimately corruption — this is especially true of the grimmer auspices like the Full Moon. Further, in this debased age there's no real proof that Luna, always a capricious spirit, really does know best in assigning life paths to her shifting children. Even if she does, well, the grass always looks greener on the other side.

The politics of this play out pretty much as one might expect — the conservative tribes view is as a blasphemous abandonment of duty, while more modern tribes take a "personal choice" view of things — and the Bone Gnawers, as usual, really don't give a damn as long as the Garou is doing something practical to stand for Gaia against the Wyrm. The character's social dynamic is forever changed around those who know about her decision, however. The werewolf viewpoint on morality is not so much a dichotomy of good and evil as natural and unnatural — and what could be more unnatural than rejecting a role that Luna herself has set down for you? This cosmological arrogance reeks to many traditionalists of the weak ways of the modern homids — and this idea is supported by the fact that very, very few lupus elect to change auspice, even in comparison to the minuscule number of homid Garou that do so.

A good analogy for an auspice change in werewolf society is a sex change in human society — it's every bit as drastic, misunderstood and socially stigmatized. No matter whether a Garou's peers are dogmatic or tolerant, there is something deeply disquieting to them about a being that decides to assume he knows better than the Celestines and reject their decision on his destiny. The need to change one's auspice isn't necessarily morally or ethically wrong — but that doesn't mean that the Garou don't feel that way.

The cost of these awesome Gifts is a terrible burden, a duty that will never end but is none the less taken on with willing joy by most Garou. A Galliard will never let the legacy or wisdom of his ancestors be forgotten. A Philodox will preserve justice and tradition with her dying breath, if need be. An Ahroun will literally give his life to defend Gaia should the need arise. After all, they are repaying a debt every bit as strong as that felt by humans towards the most loving, selfless parents. Like medieval knights, the ideal Garou's devotion to her assigned duty is absolute. Of course, the World of Darkness is far from ideal, and there are an increasing number of Garou who have betrayed their duty in some way or another. Also like medieval knights, the adherence to the duties of auspice is very stylized and formal in Garou culture. The Renown system demonstrates the huge impact that auspice has on prestige in Garou society, and a Storyteller wishing to emphasize the chivalric aspect of auspices should strictly enforce the Renown penalties for acting out of one's auspice role.

## *Falling your Auspice*

Much in this book is devoted to outlining the duties a werewolf of a given auspice has, and how they approach them. The normal assumption will be that a player will play a character who tries to live up to the demands of his auspice, learning from his mistakes, maturing into his role and eventually becoming a credit to the Garou Nation. *Werewolf* is in many ways a game about finding your niche and learning to be an asset to your society, and this journey is integral to the portrayal of auspice in the game. But not every Garou lives up to the (admittedly very harsh and rigorous) demands of auspice — so what of playing the Garou that fail?

Among the Bone Gnawers, Margaret "Mags" Alley-Walker has learned no lesson more deeply than that justice is a joke; how can she be expected to enforce it as a Philodox, when she cannot even bring herself to believe it exists? Bloodfur is an Ahroun who has long ago given up fighting for Gaia, though he does not realize this. Now, he fights only for his own personal glory, using his superior strength to dominate everyone around him. Samantha Two-Trees is a witch in the classical sense — to her, spirits are a resource to be used and abused, and she keeps everyone around her in ignorant fear of their mysteries, just as she feels a good Theurge should. Piotr Voice-of-Lions sees the truth only as a means to an end: the promotion of the Silver Fangs, and the slander of any tribes who would seek to take their power. Woe be to a Bone Gnawer seeking Renown in this Galliard's caern; he's slicker than an ancient Leech.

All of these are valid and interesting concepts for a player character, even though they are hardly ideal members of their auspices. Is it appropriate to play a character like this? Sure — but there's a few things you should keep in mind. *Werewolf* is a setting where karma is a very real force, at least as far as debts to the spirits are concerned — and those who break their promises (which is essentially what an

auspice is) will eventually get what's coming to them. Even without this, dramatic necessity demands that betrayers and oathbreakers eventually end up hoisted on their own petards. Playing out a meteoric descent into corruption and madness can be fascinating stuff, as can dancing toward the edge of the precipice before being slapped in the face with your sins and tearing toward redemption in the hopes that it's not too late.

What's really not thematically appropriate to *Werewolf*, on the other hand, is to expect your character to be able to shit on his spiritual obligations and be "clever enough" to come out on top, story after story. After all, what kind of a story would Macbeth be if the bloody-handed couple ended the tale as the unchallenged rulers of all Scotland, with no consequences in sight? Basically, then, if you want to play a character that betrays his auspice, be ready to accept the consequences of being a tragic figure, and don't fight the fall (as a player) when it comes. Instead, embrace it, and wring all the drama from your character's fiery downfall (or humbling redemption) that you can. Just don't expect the Storyteller to reward you for self-serving treachery — that's not what *Werewolf* is about.

And of course, the typical admonition that goes with any kind of strongly emotionally charged roleplaying applies here as well: Make sure you don't ham it up so much you hog the limelight and interfere with other players' roleplaying. *Werewolf* isn't just a game about a non-human but still very social culture that believes in the obligation of the individual to the greater good — it's a game played by groups, who are having fun as a group.

## *How to Use This Book*

*Book of Auspices* has about as straightforward a structure as anyone could ask for — each chapter details an auspice, from generalities of purpose to variations by tribe, even to adding new Gifts and other rules appropriate to each moon-sign. It's pretty self-explanatory.

The information contained in these pages is not meant to be constrictive — it's meant to provide inspiration, not limitations. When reading the section on Theurge archetypes, for instance, you may recognize your own character, or if not, find a direction that might suit your plans to develop him further. Perhaps multiple archetypes appeal to you, and forging a blend of each is more interesting than a more specialized approach. That's great — these archetypes are simple building blocks, nothing more.

So read the book, and share it with your fellow players. Think about just how close you want to come to the ideal member of your auspice, and how close you want to come to the more realistic average werewolf born under your moon-sign. Run a web-search for one of the programs that tells you what your own moon-sign is, if you like. Hopefully, you'll find something new about your character's auspice that adds a fresh new element to your game.

And if that fails, of course, there's always the Rite of Renunciation....



# Chapter One: Questions Without Answers

Nature never makes any blunders; when she makes a fool, she means it.

— Josh Billings

## *Edification*

No moonlight shone down on the caern, and only the bright eyes of the assembled host glittered in the torchlight. Things had been fairly standard at the moot, with ceremony, songs and drink. Now came one of the best parts, at least to the minds of most Fianna: the tale telling. One of the lupus nudged her packmate with a cold nose.

"Go ahead. You tell it."

The young Moon Dancer shrugged. "I don't know. Seems like it could use a few more details, and...."

"Tell it!" urged her companion, a tawny wolf with hazel eyes. "The time is right. The moon is new. Tell the tale."

"Well... okay." The Galliard stood then, and her septmates watched her expectantly.

"I have a tale to share," she began, "one about our wise leader when he was just a cub, fresh from the First Change, wet behind the ears." Chuckles circled among the crowd, but they stilled quickly to listen. "We have a strong tradition of teaching here in the Sept of Bridget's Blessing, and this is a story of learning and lessons. Many of you no doubt think that young Gleam in His Eye gathered his first wisdom at the foot of a Gibbous Moon, such as himself." She snuck

a quick glance at her lupus packmate, who grinned, knowing what was coming. "I'm here to say that for her own reasons, his first sept leader gave him over to one of the New Moons, of the tribe of Bone Gnawers. I see questions in your eyes. Why would a wise Half Moon do such a seemingly foolish thing? What could one who had fame as a questioner and rebel teach a cub whose destiny was to travel, sing and carry on our legends?"

The Moon Dancer sat, all eyes still upon her. "Listen, then, and I will weave the tale."

## *By Dark of the Moon*

Ian woke to the annoying stab of a sharp-toed cowboy boot in his ribs. Squinting against the sun coming in the window, he saw Andrea towering over him. Dammit, didn't she ever sleep? Last night, she'd told jokes around the fire until the wee hours, and this morning, she looked as if she'd never missed a wink. He groaned.

"Up and at 'em, pretty boy," she laughed, her Texas twang stinging his ears. "What a wimp. Come on, we got things to do, people to see, places to be."

"Unhhh. What time is it?" Ian mumbled.

"After noon, and you've had at least four hours sleep. Get up." The toe poked him again, much harder this time. "God, I'd heard the Fianna were a bunch of lazy boozers, but you take the cake, kid."

Ian felt a thread of anger strike him, then shoved it aside. "Okay, I'm up, I'm up." He rolled to his feet and rubbed the sleep from his face. "What's so damn important we have to get up this early, anyway?" The Ragabash cocked her head at his idea of "early."

"A ride into the city. Our illustrious leader has given you to me to tend this month, and it's time you started learning a thing or two about life."

The young man looked confused. "I don't get it. I thought I'd like start learning from another Galliard. No offense," he added quickly, "but you weren't born under the same moon. So, why are you teaching me?"

The Ragabash chuckled. "Maybe they're taking pity on you by saving the millions of songs, dances and chants for later. Or it could be they want to torture you a bit by letting you hang with me and my buds. Hell, I don't know. But when Blaze gives an order, I generally try to obey, unless it's damn clear she's not thinking straight. And I've never known that to happen." She tossed him a sweatshirt and jeans off the floor. "Not that you aren't cute and all, but it ain't Mardi Gras, and the Big Easy fuzz might have something to say about a naked teenager. I'll wait for you outside."

Ian shook his head and got dressed.

### *Beginnings*

Ian hadn't imagined a werewolf would drive a car, but Andrea did, an ugly, pea-green Volkswagen. She parked it on Jackson Square, not even bothering to lock the doors. Small wonder, thought Ian; somebody would have to be nuts to steal that repulsive thing.

"I'm starving. Let's get a bite," said Andrea, and pretty soon, they were diving into big muffalettes and downing a couple of Dixie Blackened Voodoos, sitting on an isolated bench by the river.

"Well, let's see. I guess I need to start by talking about myself. I'm a New Moon, a Ragabash. That much you knew already. But I bet you don't really have a clue about what it is we do for our people as a whole, do you?"

"Uh, I think you guys sort of keep things light and stop the fights and such, right? And you play pranks?" Ian tried frantically to remember things he'd learned before his Rite of Passage, but he was drawing a blank.

Andrea nodded. "Not bad. That's certainly part of what it means to be a New Moon. But it's a small fraction of the whole. Take your own auspice, for example. Are all Galliards musicians? Hell no. Likewise, not all of us are comedians."

"Here's a story for you, the birth of the first Ragabash. Long ago, when the world was new and all that, Gaia got bored. She'd made things as she wanted, but it was just too perfect. Who's that chick the Black Furies are always talking about...oh, yeah, Arachne. The point is, when something is flawless, it's an affront to nature. So Gaia decided, along with her pal Luna, that werewolves born under the new moon would get to be the symbols of how if people try too hard to be perfect, stuffy, over-impressed with themselves, they need a good swift kick in the butt."

"I thought the honor of imperfection went to the metis," Ian remarked dryly. *Sounds like she got this story off a bathroom wall*, he thought to himself.

Andrea shook her head. "Quit interrupting my tale here. You may be the Galliard, but I still get to hold my tail higher than yours. Where was I? Oh, the purpose of the New Moons. Right. In general, then, we're what's called 'the questioners of the way.' We get to bring some levity to the whole gig, too. Good God, we'd kill ourselves if we didn't have something to laugh about occasionally. You and I both know it's a serious job to be one of Gaia's warriors, but too much of this stern and lofty bullshit saps strength. We can make peace, or take it away. We can poke holes in the best-laid plans of the Ahroun and the Half-Moon, and save everyone's ass in the process."

Ian thought a minute. "So you sort of make sure the packs don't take themselves too seriously while also running interference and testing resolve."

Andrea beamed. "Exactly. You're a bright boy. Catch on pretty fast."

### *Well-Known Nut*

"Well, I guess I'd better fill you in on the well-known New Moons, 'cause if you can't answer a bunch of questions about history and current events, I'll be the one who gets in trouble." Andrea polished off her beer and tossed the bottle into the garbage. "C'mon, we're going to go meet a buddy of mine. You'll like him, even if he is a geek."

Ian walked along beside her, soaking up the ambience of the old city. It seemed longer than the six months he'd come here with his parents, only to find that there was more to his heritage than he'd ever thought possible. And a lot more crap in the world than he'd been ready to take.

"Ever read *The Phantom Tollbooth*?" Andrea asked, interrupting his thoughts of the past.

"Uh, can't say that I have," said Ian.

"Too bad. I found a copy in some rich brat's bookbag on this very street. He sure hadn't been reading it, so I borrowed it. Good stuff, should be

required reading for any New Moon. Anyway, you can think of this as your mytho-poetic journey. You're not going to meet any dogs named Tock, but I guarantee you'll find the people you do meet pretty interesting. Fodder for future stories." They rounded a couple more corners and turned into a back street alley. Andrea knocked on a metal door and waited. A minute later, it opened with a creak. Ian followed her inside to what looked like NASA's mission control.

Computers took up most every square inch of space, and what hardware didn't cover, papers did, along with some dried substance that smelled like stale pizza. The computers weren't your average desktop models, either, but big servers with lots of blinking lights. Ian could find his way around the average PC, but not this stuff. The rectangular room was dim, walls concealed by newspaper clippings and magazine articles. Ian looked up as a guy scurried over from the far end of the office, if you could call it that. His mop of white hair and pink eyes marked him a metis, but his scant appraisal of his guests was piercing. He allowed Andrea to give him a quick kiss on the cheek.

"Ian, meet my long-time buddy Eduardo. Eddie, this is my newest charge, Ian. Eddie's a Glass Walker," she added. "A Ragabash like me."

"Have you held off on the best parts?" asked the Glass Walker. His voice was high pitched and squeaky. "Because if you've started on the details without me..."

"Nah, nothing major. Just some things about Luna. I saved the stories of the New Moon heroes and the tribal stuff so you could join in."

Eddie nodded. "Good, good. Well, go on and get started. I'll be sure and put in my two cents when I feel you're screwing up."

Andrea rolled her eyes. "Whatever. Okay, then, I want to tell you about a couple of names to know, some good, some bad. First on my mental list is a Bone Gnawer—"

"Figures," muttered Eddie.

"Who's talking now, huh? As I was saying, when so rudely interrupted, one of my tribe's best-known New Moons is a guy up in DC called Cracked Teeth. Some Ragabash, as you'll see, go for the political angle, and I reckon he's had lots of experience. Works with political action committees as well as your run-of-the-mill protesters. In a similar line of work is one of your own Fianna, fellow by the name of Stuart Brown, though werewolves call him Stalks-the-Truth. He's sort of a journalist who uncovers some pretty sensational stories and plots every now and then."

"And don't forget that Luna also taught us the tradition of playing the trickster, even if that's not the only way to get things done," piped up Eddie. "I've heard a lot about this Wendigo elder called Charging Bull.

Apparently, he's got a grand reputation as not only a prankster, but also one who has impeccable timing. Some say he can slice up your ego, deservedly of course, so keenly that you don't realize it until hours later."

Andrea cleared off a table and sat, legs folded beneath her. "Pranks are all part of the game, as Julisha of the Thousand Masks could tell you. She's an African Black Fury who apparently never appears the same way twice. Makes her hell on wheels as a con artist. But don't forget a Ragabash can also be a kick-ass warrior. One I'd hate to scrap with is this Get of Fenris character named Stigghalf Bone-Breaker, or some tongue twister pretty close to that. For him, questioning how werewolves behave is picking a fight with whoever happens to come around."

"Spare me the Get and their ways," interrupted Eddie. "You also need to tell him about that other Norse creep, Wards-the-Dead. A New Moon, maybe, but he went loco, if you know what I mean, and fucked over the entire tribe."

Andrea cleared her throat. "Okay, I didn't say they were perfect. And before you bring it up, I know the poor Silent Striders had one of theirs go bonkers, too. They called him Abnatha the Laughing One. But look, that's just two out of a whole list of heroic New Moons."

"Can you say that Red Talon Ragabash Crookpaw is sane, Andi?" Eddie retorted.

"No, but consider what all the Red Talons have had to endure. And Crookpaw's metis, to boot. So he's a little extreme. At least he's doing something, biting the asses of the wolves and getting them involved. I don't mind a little credit going to him for that." She huffed in anger. "Thanks a lot, I've completely lost my train of thought."

Eddie grinned. "Then let me chime in a bit. If we didn't mention Celeste Walks-the-Spiral-Backward, our friend Zophia would be hurt. Celeste is supposedly this Silver Fang who seriously kicks ass. She's famous around the world, and some people say she destroyed a Wyrm-infested caern all by herself. I'd love to meet her, in any case. Anyway, we've probably left out a few famous New Moons, but there's a few to get you started, should you feel the urge to burst into song or something. What I want you to remember is that even though we're few in number, we're just as important as any Ahroun."

### *Playing the Part*

"Do you like movies, kid? Ever see the original *Star Wars*? It's an old flick now, so even some of the elders may have heard of it; they don't go for things like that often, you see, because it's pretty hard for most of us to go out and about after the First Change. There's no doubt in my mind that Han Solo would've been a Ragabash. Ahhh, what a guy! He had guts, wits and

looks to boot. Well, like him, many of us New Moons are quirky. We enjoy wit and never letting people guess what we're going to do next. It keeps everybody on their toes. And what I'll bet Andi didn't tell you is that we help serve as a sort of pressure valve on the volatile nature of our society. What do I mean by that? It's this simple: When a werewolf gets all fired up, sometimes levity is needed to let off some steam, lest all that anger be released on some poor Kin or innocent bystander. A Ragabash can help lighten the mood and keep heads cool. Don't think that doesn't take some nerves of steel. Ever stood between two Ahroun who were ready to tear each other's heads off for no reason? I have, and while not exactly fun for me, it sure beat certain other possibilities. Look, we're a dwindling race. No need for us to make mistakes and off each other, not now."

"Also, let's not forget the human part of our natures," he continued. "I hesitate to call some of the human heroes and deities *tricksters*, per se. Some of them were just inordinately clever. Maybe thinking of them as a force of change, an element of chaos in an otherwise static culture is a better analogy. Some of these characters are from legend, and probably had a basis in fact. Others were perhaps an invention of the human mind as a means of explaining the unexplainable. Who am I talking about? Well, there are your typical folks we'll

discuss later such as Loki of the Norse sagas, Odysseus of Greek myth and Coyote of the American Indians. But have you ever heard of Mr. Spider? He's right out of western Africa, and the descendants of those folks have spread his name to the West Indies and South America. Mr. Spider has a lot of names, like Anansi or Annency. He plays tricks, sure enough, but what he's best known for is his wisdom and creativity. There's a quote, 'The wisdom of the spider is greater than that of all the world put together.' That's right out of tales about Mr. Spider himself."

"One of my personal favorites is Hanuman, the Monkey God," said Andrea. "He's the ultimate scout and has an important place in the east, in lands as diverse as China, India and Japan. Hanuman's greatest skills are his courage and willingness to try any feat, no matter how wild or dangerous, to help his friends. That's a pretty good example for us to follow."

Eddie tapped his pen on his teeth as he sat in a broken chair. "Okay, back to our spiritual selves. I should also mention the whole idea behind the waxing and waning moon. The true new moon isn't either — there's one night of waning, one night of "true" new moon, and then one night of waxing as Luna begins to grow again. And of course it's impossible to tell *what* the new moon is doing by sight; you have to know the



schedule. But the Theurges can usually tell, and they're quick to talk about what the moon's doing when one of us is born. Those born under a new moon neither waxing nor waning are the "purest" Ragabash, or so Theurges like to say — no tendencies for acting any one way. If you're like Andi over there, a waxing Ragabash, you get this rep for being kind of happy-go-lucky, a maintain-an-even keel type, which can be a detriment if you're trying to seriously question the elders. Me, I was birthed under the waning moon, and quite unfairly, I'll add, we're considered to have a sort of dry, gloomy outlook on things, kind of like Edward Gorey. As one New Moon put it so eloquently, a waxing moon might warn a sept leader of impending doom with gallows humor, but a waning moon would take lots of time to describe every awful possibility before adding that things aren't as bad as they may seem. Not really true, but that's the story you'll hear."

### *The Heart of the Sept*

Andrea saw her chance and jumped into the conversation. "Well, Eddie does have a way with words. Okay, let me tell you a little bit about what the Ragabash do in the sept. You've been to a couple of moots now, participated in some rites. You know how important these things are to us. But you probably also saw how much of what happens in our ceremonies is guided by the Theurges, Galliards and Half-Moons."

"Yeah, I was wondering about that," said Ian. "Can a Ragabash hold an office in the sept?"

"Of course! To be perfectly accurate, they can hold damn near *any* office, but it's a little rarer to see them as Grand Elders, Masters of the Rite, Masters of the Howl, Callers of the Wyld, Truthcatchers or Talesingers. All those offices are better suited to Garou born to uphold certain traditions, not to bend them."

"Uh, then what does that leave?" asked Ian.

"Plenty. Usually, a New Moon of rank sits on the Council of Elders. A Ragabash is a great asset in getting a council to see all sides of an issue. Also, a Ragabash can really aid an Ahroun who's serving as Warden by acting as a Guardian; he can be the Full Moon's eyes and ears while on patrol. Likewise, New Moons make fine Wyrm Foes or Keepers of the Land."

"For a Ragabash with a certain amount of charm and wit, there's always the role of Gatekeeper," added Eddie. "Sometimes, they're going to find it easier to meet and greet other septs and werewolves because they're down to earth and easy to talk with. Now, some packs may give us the hairy eyeball due to our overblown rep for pulling pranks, but we've got better sense than to do that while acting as liaisons to other septs."

### *The Soul of the Pack*

"As far as within the pack," continued Andrea, "the Ragabash often has to act as referee. Even the best packmates fight and quarrel, and a certain amount of that is healthy. But it can go overboard real quick. We can yank apart the scrappers and then let the pack leader or Philodox sort out the details. Also, keeping the spirits of the pack members high is an important duty. No doubt it's the Gibbous Moon's job to sing and make everybody merry with stories and such, but if everyone's gloomy, we can perk things up almost as well."

"A sadder duty that New Moons have is helping remember the good times of the fallen after a battle," Eddie sighed. "It's natural and right we should grieve, but not to the point we waste away or forget why we're still living. Sometimes it's we Ragabash who have to bite the asses of our brokenhearted packmates to get them up and moving. It's damn hard to do that when you too want to lie down and have a good cry. But life goes on. If we can remind people about the happy moments, it helps get through the hurt and the sorrow." He smiled at Ian. "Hope it's a long time before you ever have to worry about that, though."

### *Angels*

"Well, let's get on with talking about the tribes. I think he knows the names and such, but I want him to know something about the New Moons specifically," said Andrea. "Go ahead, Eddie, this is what you wanted to do. Start with the Furies, why don't you." Eddie gave her a crooked smile.

### *Black Furies*

"Fury New Moons more often than not seem to be a rather depressive lot. Some feel that by being born without Luna's light, they need to find out what they've done to displease her, so they spend much of their time trying to fix anything that goes wrong. A Fury also seems more bent on change than most New Moons. Perhaps from their perspective as protectors of all females, there's more to change. I haven't spent much time with any Furies, to be honest — I'm always stepping on their last nerve — but I hear tell they can be even more vicious than their tribemates. Where an Ahroun may simply tear apart a rapist, a Ragabash's vengeance will likely be drawn out, more painful, and less traceable to werewolves. They drive their prey mad before killing them, if the luckless victims don't take their own lives first."

### *Bone Crawlers*

"Now, let me tell you a bit about my tribe's Ragabash traditions," Andrea interrupted. "We've got your infamous fun-loving New Moons, along with the burglars

and pickpockets, rascals and rogues. But although you don't see them much, for obvious reasons, a Bone Gnawer Ragabash is often an artist at subterfuge and stealth. We're great at sneaking into enemy hideouts and doing the recon work. It's all part of making the job of the Full and Half-Moons easier. They're the best muscle and the finest planners, respectively. No argument there. But without the intelligence reports, the best-laid plans go to hell in a handbasket."

"Don't forget the activists, too, Andi," said Eddie. "You guys can rival us on that score. I know most werewolves steer clear of human affairs, but the Gnawers and Walkers are two exceptions. Think of any big revolution, and you can bet a Bone Gnawer was watching closely at the very least. It's something that the Silver Fangs don't like to think about, you know?"

### *Children of Gaia*

"Now, I don't mean to be unfair or unkind," began Eddie, as Andrea winced, "but a Child of Gaia New Moon will often make you want to go running for the insulin, they're so lofty and idealistic in the goals they set. Luna help me, you can't help but like and admire them. They have high-minded and noble intentions. Their tribe gives them a fair bit of respect, too, because as many Children of Gaia are reform-minded, the Ragabash is central to proposing new ideas and practices."

"What Eddie didn't mention," frowned Andrea, "is a whole lot of New Moon Children are devoted to peacemaking. They take it a few steps further and have unfailingly waded hip deep in shit that'd make your hair stand on end, just to make a truce hold or mollify some overblown egos. I may not feel exactly the same way, but they got lots of guts. Not too much sense maybe, but give 'em credit for their gumption."

"Of course, on the other side, you have the ones who question tradition — and in the case of the Children of Gaia, they question the idea that peace or negotiation is necessarily the answer for whatever situation is at hand. Ever seen a Child of Gaia argue for war? I have; it's something else to see how sharp Unicorn's hooves can get. And with a good Ragabash making the case, it's downright frightening to see the other Children going along with his arguments."

### *Fianna*

"Have you actually met a Ragabash from your own tribe, Ian?" Eddie asked. The young Fianna shook his head.

"Too bad. They've got a fairly interesting job, although it's not one I'd relish. A term has come down to us from British history, and that's 'kingmaker.' Fianna New Moons have as one of their duties to watch their elders and sort of keep them on their toes.

The most renowned ones, or so it's said, have been able to make or break the great leaders just by questioning and being nosy. A few well-placed jabs can raise doubt, and well, a leader should be above reproach. Not that those who've fallen haven't deserved it, of course."

"You're also likely to meet one of your tribe's Ragabash during a time of war," chimed in Andrea. "When you get around to learning those millions of tales I was warning you about, I'm sure a huge portion of 'em will be about all the clever things Fianna New Moons have done through the ages."

### *Get of Fenris*

"I'll be the first to admit that I find the Get of Fenris a little, ah, extremist," explained Andrea, ignoring Eddie's snort. "But they are what they are: totally dedicated to destroying their enemies, any way they can. That's why they don't really consider the sneaky Ragabash such a bad thing. Despite what Eddie here might say, my folks've got a fair bit in common with them when it comes to pulling recon duty. They're fine tacticians who don't always get the respect they deserve from their tribemates; after all, they use cunning and trickery to bring down the foe. But the elders make sure they're at least tolerated by the younger Garou, for they know that all who use their full strength against the Wyrm are worthy of respect — and smarts magnify strength. I've met Ragabash that make an art of turning foemen against each other, weakening the enemy considerably before the Full Moons finally strike."

"It's probably not an accident that some Get Ragabash honor Loki," added Eddie. "I don't know how much you know about him, but the important thing about him was that he wasn't *only* someone who played mean jokes. If it weren't for him, Odin wouldn't have Sleipnir, his eight-legged steed. Actually, in a way, he helped bring about a new age of the world, one where everything would be green and idyllic. Food for thought, anyway."

### *Glass Walkers*

"Moving right along," Eddie chimed in, "you've probably figured out that my gig is hacking. That's such a simple way of putting it because there are times I feel that working with my computers is almost, well, holy in a way. Like an out of body experience, I suppose. It's a common practice among Glass Walker New Moons, but it's just the tip of the iceberg. In a broader sense, what we do is find the weakness in our enemies and expose it for our packs to see. That fatal flaw could be anything, from dirty dealings in the mortal world to Wyrm corruption. In any case, knowing an enemy's Achilles heel can help bring them down quick and efficiently. Sometimes we've got to point out our own

peoples' weaknesses as well — test security measures, that sort of thing. We've also got a rep as decent activists, like we mentioned before, and also innovators. Give us a chance, and we'll come up with a new way to tackle a problem. Sort of like lateral thinking puzzles, if you've ever worked through one of those."

### *Red Talons*

Eddie shifted his eyes back to Andrea. "Want to tell him a bit about the Talons?"

Andrea sighed. "Ian's already heard how they're hard-pressed these days, what with the overdevelopment of land and such. So I try to be a little forgiving. Kind of like the Get, though, the Red Talons are a bit, um, fanatical. And in that same vein, the Ragabash is almost never a leader. What she does, though, is take the steps necessary to keep the alpha on his toes. That means she'll poke fun at him and even mock his authority... with the whole purpose of showing her throat."

"You mean she wants him to attack her?" asked Ian, puzzled.

"Not really. What she's doing is reinforcing the alpha's dominance by giving him the chance to put her down. I know, it's a bit strange, but don't forget that even in human form, we have body language and such to show who's the boss. The Red Talons, if nothing else, help us understand the same concept in our four-legged forms."

### *Shadow Lords*

Eddie nodded. "Well put. Okay, moving right along, let's talk about the Shadow Lords. Er, he does know about these folks, right?" he asked.

Andrea winked. "Oh sure, he even met old Greymantle out at the sept. They got along just fine."

"Right." Eddie shuddered. "Anyway, the Shadow Lord New Moons have a fairly interesting take on their job, and that's serving the tribal leaders as rivals and adversaries. Now, most of them never have any doubt that they'll rise to high and lofty positions; that isn't really the goal anyway. Or at least, that's what they say. Well, let's just take them on surface level for a moment. Consider all the great leaders of history. Most have had a talented second or even a friendly competitor to keep them pushing the envelope to get better at whatever it is they do. That's what the Shadow Lord Ragabash is all about — making certain his leaders are the best. I think that's a pretty thankless role."

"You make it sound delightful," snorted Andrea. "Moving right along...."

### *Silent Striders*

"All right, all right," Eddie conceded. "Let's discuss the Silent Striders. I don't think you'll find many

hanging around septs, but I bet you'll meet one sooner than later. As you know, they like to wander. As such, they hear all kinds of interesting stuff. Maybe their Galliards have some of the strangest and least-heard tales of all, but it's the New Moons who have the best gossip and news. It's like they collect all these tidbits and store them away for future use."

"Some of the New Moons sort of see themselves as traveling problem solvers, too," said Andrea. "They're willing to pitch in and help do whatever needs doin', wherever they happen to be. All in all, a pretty decent bunch of folks to have as friends. In battle, though, it's a different story. They're damn scary. Like a spirit of vengeance, they appear almost out of nowhere, deal out cold, remorseless death, and are gone like the night wind. Once someone's angered the Strider New Moon, they'd best look over their shoulders the rest of their days, for eventually they'll see their doom, loping behind."

### *Silver Fangs*

"We're going to meet a Silver Fang Ragabash later today," continued Andrea, "but just so you're warned ahead of time, they're a little different. Eccentric, I guess you'd say. Some of 'em have rather interesting personality quirks, weird mannerisms. But for a rather haughty bunch overall, the Fang's New Moons are fairly approachable. Again, they're sort of between a rock and a hard place in that they're a tribe that treasures its past and traditions above everything else... and here's the Ragabash whose job it is to question those ways and bring about new ideas and beliefs. Change comes kinda slow to the Silver Fangs, but what innovations have occurred are no doubt due to the cunning of the New Moons."

"Wonder if Zophia knows anything about the Silver Fang crowd and whether their hot-shot leader has a Ragabash tickling his elbow?" asked Eddie.

Andrea shrugged. "Don't know, but if he's as all-fire smart as everyone says, he'd better."

### *Uktena*

"In a crowd of folks that dearly loves their secrets, the Uktena New Moons are the best secret-keepers of the lot," said Andrea with an admiring grin. "I won't go so far as to call them *interrogators*, but if you've ever talked with a Ragabash of this tribe, you come away not quite sure of where your head is. They play the usual mindgames and such, but what they really love doing is venturing out into the world and collecting all kinds of information, then bringing it back home for, hmmm, let's call it protection."

Eddie let out a hollow laugh. "What my lovely friend here is trying to say diplomatically is that they'll double-talk you, find out what you know, then take it



back to their elders, who'll mull it over and file it away for future use. They've probably got all kinds of secrets hidden away at their caerns. A little scary, if you ask me."

### *Wendigo*

"Well, then, let's wrap up things here with the Wendigo," said Eddie. Like the Uktena, they consider themselves Pure Ones, you know, folks not of European origin who came over and took their land. Maybe it's true they have some sort of special connection with Mother Earth; I wouldn't know about their particular perspective. What I do know is that they generally hold the New Moons in pretty high esteem within the tribe. Forget the stereotypes of Native Americans as dour and humorless; it's pretty much bullshit. In fact, the job of the Wendigo Ragabash is to bring laughter when needed, to break the rules and generally keep life interesting and out of the ordinary."

Ian nodded, hoping he'd digested this huge pile of information. "Hey, can I ask a question?"

The two New Moons looked at him in surprise. "Sure," said Eddie. "Heck, we didn't give you much of a chance to talk in there, did we?"

"That's okay. I guess my question is this: If the tribes pretty much stay apart, how is it you guys know so much about the others?"

Andrea smiled broadly. "Not a bad observation. Okay, since you asked, I'll tell you. Unlike some of the other auspices, we Ragabash *talk* to one another. We're fairly open with each other. We figure if one of our jobs is to know how to keep our folks from killing in a moment of madness, we'd better have some info at hand. That answer your question?"

"I think so," said the young Galliard. "What else do you want me to know?"

"Why don't you tell us what you'd like to hear next?" replied Andrea.

### *School's in Session*

Ian thought a minute. "What about your young New Moons? Do you let them hang out with other auspices, or do you keep them with you all the time, or what?"

Eddie foraged a minute under his desk and pulled out a pizza box. "Umm, this one's pretty fresh." He opened it up, and sure enough, a steaming pepperoni pie rested inside. "I think most elders, and by that I mean anybody with some rank under his belt, is going to realize that we have to share in the education of our youngsters. You know that old African saying about it takes a village to raise a child and all. So, we encourage our cubs to get out, frolic, live it up, learn a thing or two."

Andrea fetched cold beers from the dilapidated fridge in the corner. "Well, let's back up just a second and talk about birth and all that."

### Kids and Kin

"Okay, any Theurge worth spit will be able to tell you whether a newborn's going to be Garou or Kin. And with some minor calculations, or just mere observation, she'll know the auspice, too. The announcement of a New Moon's birth is always greeted with some chuckles of anticipation and a few raised brows. I guess I have to admit that in this day and age, Ahroun births seem to be what everyone wants." She popped the top off her bottle. "Too damn bad. We can't all be Full Moons."

"You mentioned something before about there not being so many New Moons anymore," said Ian. "Why is that?"

"Nobody knows," sighed Eddie. "I mean, it's not just because there's fewer new moon nights in a month. From all the histories, they say that there's always been an equal chance for any of Luna's five faces to appear in her chosen warriors, on account of her will, but it just isn't so."

"I heard here and there it's yet *another* impending sign of the End Times," Andrea replied. "Then again, what isn't? I sometimes think an elder gets an ingrown toenail, and that's a portent of doom."

"What about Kin?" asked Ian. "Do our Kinfolk have auspices, too?"

"Nah, not really. I mean, they may have a few tendencies, but I'd say they lean more towards the attitudes of their werewolf brothers and sisters than having any particular inclinations themselves. I have a fair number of Kin back in Texas, and I'd say we're more alike than different. Similar appreciation of humor, change and all that. Your sister probably has some skills at singing or storytelling, right? Possibly because you're a Galliard, but there's no saying for certain."

### First Change

"If I had to pick a word to describe how a Ragabash reacts to the First Change, it'd be curiosity," said Eddie. "Sure, it's a physical and mental shock in the worst way, but it's sort of exhilarating, too. New and different, stirring to the senses, all that stuff. Some other auspices are going to get pretty spooked by it, but the New Moon soaks it all up and rolls with the punches. She'll goof around for a while, trying out the new forms, testing her senses. The whole point is that she'll learn to adapt fairly quickly."

"Still," cautioned Andrea, "the local werewolves should try to find the new changer as soon as possible. I've heard rumors of young New Moons getting a little too exuberant, and then you see all kinds of

crazy stories in the supermarket tabloids that make you wonder."

"Or worse, on shows like *America's Most Wanted*. Nobody wants that happening, right?" said Eddie.

"Never," grinned Andrea.

### The Rite of Passage

"Remember your Rite of Passage?" Andrea continued. "You can probably guess the various tasks other auspices receive: An Ahroun gets to fight a Wyrm critter, a Theurge has to negotiate with a spirit, and so on. Well, for my Rite, I had to do three things: Make a crying child laugh, convince an elder I was telling the truth and make two warriors show throat. Not easy. Took me a couple of weeks, but I managed to pull it off."

"Yeah, mine was more or less the same kind of thing, you know, proving that I was wily," added Eddie. "Only I had to come up with a way to get into one of the elder's strongholds without getting caught. Security cameras everywhere, not to mention all the guards armed with silver bullets. Sheesh."

"The Rite of Passage in general for the Ragabash is going to try to pull out her essence to the surface," explained Andrea. "The whole point is to use our strengths to prove our worth. It's not easy, but it's necessary, as it shows to all werewolves present that you're a credit to the sept and ready to take on adult responsibilities."

### Seed Time

"Okay, back to your original question," she continued. "How do we teach our Ragabash? It's surprisingly easy. We just throw 'em into the pond and let 'em soak it all up."

"What she's trying to say, with her typical eloquence," interrupted Eddie, "is that the best way to teach a Ragabash is from life itself. No scrolls, no books, no lectures. Sure, we talk to them, but usually in the context of doing something else. We take our young New Moons with us when we travel, fight or perform our regular duties at the sept. They watch, and they learn. Little by little, their tasks increase as their skills improve. It'd be great if we had all the time in the world, but sad to say, the apprenticeship, if you will, is terribly short. There are too many responsibilities that need tending for our young to really enjoy themselves before they're tossed into the fray."

### The Others

The door banged open. "Am I late, am I late? This watch thing you gave me, it broke. I do not know how to fix it. Did you do that on purpose?"

Ian looked up as a petite, rounded silvery blonde woman, dressed in a flowing peasant skirt and white

billowy blouse burst into the room. Her ice blue eyes fixed on him.

"What is this? Plucked chicken? It looks too skinny to be alive! Eduardo, have you not fed it?"

Andrea gave a laugh and embraced the woman. "Zophia, you look awesome. Glad to see you've taken to wearing those clothes we bought. I didn't want to deal with the gawking tourists again." She winked at her protégé. "Ian Corrigan, meet Zophia Rosmarvo. She's a New Moon of the Silver Fangs, and an old friend."

Zophia sniffed Ian. "Ah, another two-legged one. He is a New Moon, too?"

"Nah, a Galliard, but I'm trying to teach him a thing or two. Zophia here's a lupus who ended up in some trouble out on the bayou. I gave her a hand, and we've been buds ever since. She likes hangin' with us almost as much as running around the swamps."

"Just don't tell all her Silver Fang pals," snorted Eddie. "I don't want to know what they'd think of her hanging around with a couple of low-life townies."

Zophia gave him a mock slap on the cheek. "Do not insult yourself, it is not nice." She helped herself to a piece of the pizza. "What lies have they told you, boy?"

"Uh, not too much," stammered Ian. "Mostly about the New Moons, and who they are and such."

"I reached you just in time," said Zophia between bites. "What have they said of the others, Luna's different faces?"

"Well, nothing really," said Ian.

"We were just getting to that part when you barged in," answered Eddie.

"Hah! I am going to speak now. And those two can hold their tongues a moment." Tossing her crust to the side, the Silver Fang sat down beside Andrea.

"We have a different relationship with each other auspice," Zophia explained. "I will tell you about all."

### *Crescent Moon*

"When Luna begins to stir after the time of no moon, her light is pale and delicate. In this dimness, we can see for the first time, and so it is we meet those of the Crescent Moon. They understand more than any other auspice what we are like, for they are closest to the new moon in essence. Still, their minds too often are on the other world, the land of spirits. So, one of our tasks is to anchor them to the present, to this place and moment. Many times the Theurges appreciate our unique style of wisdom and are more than willing to listen to our words."

### *Half-Moon*

"In our desire to keep the peace, we are allies with the Half-Moons. Since they are most often our leaders

in peacetime, we focus much of our attention on their behavior. No one can admire an alpha who stands always aloof and apart. So we encourage them to listen to the words of their subordinates, to spend time among their people rather than always running with the elders. In some tribes, the role of the New Moon is to provoke and prod the Half-Moons to excel; a few do this by humor, others by challenge and talk. Suffice it to say that they would not lead so well were it not for us. Still, it is a relationship of unease at times. A Half-Moon sometimes does not like to be questioned or to have her strategies unwoven. So we must exercise care in the ways we do our duties."

### *Gibbous Moon*

"I have heard other New Moons say the Galliards are loud and boisterous. Well, that may be true, but it is worthwhile to hear their words. A Ragabash always needs to know the latest gossip and tales, to best understand the mood of the sept and the tribes. Now, I must say it is rather fun to let air from the inflated egos of the Moon Dancers, but mind their claws! Next to the Full Moons, their tempers flare the most easily of all."

### *Full Moon*

"Are the Full Moons our opposites, or are we next to them in the circle of Luna's faces? This is difficult to say. On many occasions, we find them too angry, the rage too strong within them, for any capacity for reason or insight. Still, are we not a race of warriors, born for the hunt? We cannot expect them to be anything less than they are. What we can do is serve as their shadows, reminding them to keep a thread of wisdom in their hearts even as they slaughter our enemies. Maybe that is why Luna placed us beside each other in the dark and light."

Zophia finished her speech and drank deeply from the bottle Eddie had opened for her.

"Wow," Ian breathed. "Geez. That was... really cool."

"Zophia has a pretty good knack for telling tales, and that cool accent doesn't hurt any, either," retorted Andrea. "But don't let her fool you; she's no Galliard."

"Maybe once, in another life," replied the Silver Fang. "Sometimes I dream of it. Speaking of which, we must also tell him about the New Moon and the spirits. No young one's education would be complete otherwise."

### *The Other World*

"I'll get this going," said Eddie, "since I've got a few spirits hanging around here helping me out. An outstanding benefit of being a Ragabash in dealing with spirits is that they sort of understand you. I mean, it's almost something innate or inborn with them. Some spirits can be pretty capricious, you know, and maybe that's why we get along pretty well with them."

"They tend to forgive us," added Zophia, "because they do not reject the core of what it means to be New Moon. They see us for what we are, and they admire that we do not deny our fundamental natures, even when others become annoyed with us."

"The other thing about spirits is that they like attention, and other than Theurges, we're some of the best chit-chatters around," said Andrea. "Your typical Ahroun is grunting and heaving, off to some battle, but we don't mind sitting a spell and talking. We remember what spirits tell us, and we keep their secrets. Makes for a good relationship all the way around."

Ian's head swam with all this information, and he looked so dazed, Andrea had to laugh. "Poor Moon Dancer, maybe you'd have rather learned all those Gaelic chants and dances. We did throw a lot at you, didn't we?"

"No, that's okay. I just had no idea about all this stuff. Don't worry, I've got it up here," he pointed at his head.

"Well, if that is so, I must collect Eduardo here and finish some business," announced Zophia. "You have gathered my information, yes?"

"Sure, sure. Let me get my laptop, and I'll come with you. Ian, nice to meet you; don't be a stranger," said Eddie, giving him a wave.

"Yes, you must visit our sept and tell us one of those tales for which your tribe is so famous," Zophia added. "Andrea will bring you."

"Bring him?" said Andrea. "Hell, folks, we'd planned to come with you on your little monkeywrench. If you don't mind, of course." Zophia and Eddie shared a cocked eyebrow, then the Glass Walker shrugged.

"Might be good to have a strong arm along. I don't expect trouble, but one never knows."

Ian swallowed nervously, but couldn't conceal the eagerness in his voice. "I'll do whatever I can to help."

Andrea punched him on the shoulder. "We know that, kid. Let's see what Eddie and Zophia have got going on."

"We're still a bit in the dark," replied Eddie, "but not for long." He booted up the sophisticated and slim laptop from his shoulder bag. Moments later, a mapping program showing part of a floorplan appeared. "This is the layout of the Harmon BioLife Research Center. Or the one that's actually on file down at the building inspector's office downtown. Zophia and I both suspect there's more going on here than meets the eye."

"One of our Kin is expecting a cub," said Zophia, "and she was sent here for some 'specialized tests.' This woman, she knows little of the Garou way, only that

her cousins have 'odd ways.' We want to tell her more, bring her closer to us, but now... she might be a risk."

"Regardless of that, we don't think everything is all cozy and sweet at this facility," Eddie continued. "We've tracked several women in a family way being sent there for prenatal testing, and when they come back, they're usually a little different. Nothing we've been able to pinpoint precisely, but my sept leader and Zophia's both want some inside info since now it involves Kin. So we're going on recon. Today, they close at five, so we figured it'd be the perfect time." He pointed to his watch. "It's already seven, and luckily it gets dark early around this time of year."

Andrea pulled off her light jacket and motioned to Ian. "Get rid of anything that's not been dedicated. Looks like we're going on a walk."

Eddie got up and opened the door leading to his shabby bathroom. A large mirror hung on the door's back. "Might make it a little easier if you're still new at this, Ian. We'll go in ahead, you and Andrea do back up." He kept his laptop with him, Ian noticed. Zophia had already taken off her clothes and in quick, practiced fashion, shrank to become a well-muscled silvery-white wolf with brilliant blue eyes. She darted through the mirror, Eddie right behind her on two legs. Andrea motioned for Ian to follow.

*I'll never get used to this,* he thought, feeling the chill of passage between worlds. He stood in Eddie's building, now a shadowy reflection of walls and computers, covered in cobwebs. Multi-legged spirits with gleaming green eyes grinned at him from the corners, and the Galliard was grateful to hurry after the others and get away from the place.

They walked through the streets of New Orleans, and Ian noticed that many buildings appeared fairly solid. Catching his glance, Andrea spoke. "It's an old place. Watch your step; not everything here's pretty and sweet."

Before too long, they stood before a building that shimmered only faintly in the pale light. Cobwebs shrouded it, and Ian saw more of the gruesome spiders he'd spied at Eddie's place.

"This is it," muttered the Glass Walker. "Let's check the perimeter and meet on the other side." They split into two pairs and made their way carefully around the edge of the facility. Ian was both disappointed and relieved to notice nothing seemed out of the ordinary as he followed Andrea and kept his eyes peeled. A few minutes later, they'd rejoined the others.

"No guards. No danger," whispered Zophia. "We go in?"

Eddie frowned. "It seems a bit too cut and dried. But yeah, what the hell. Lemme take care of something real quick." He opened his pack and pulled out the laptop. It clicked and hummed briefly, then Ian saw some flickers in and around the building. "There, that should give us a few minutes without having to worry about their damn cameras. You guys stay close." Quickly, he moved to a side door, then vanished, Zophia and Andrea on his heels.

It took Ian a few minutes to follow, and by the time he felt the damp wind of the real world tousling his hair, Eddie had already opened the door that stood on the building's southwest side. *Damn, that was fast*, though Ian. He noticed that the door's lynchpins had simply popped out of their casings.

Zophia took a whiff and whispered, "Weaver-stink." She crossed the threshold and padded softly down the hall to their right. Eddie glanced around and followed, stopping momentarily before a door.

"Wait. This is a lab. I want to check it out." He whispered something to the door, and in a few seconds, it swung open. The four of them peered into a nightmare.

Housed in giant flasks were swollen, transparent egg sacs containing what appeared to be fetuses—deformed things with multiple limbs and organs. Ian bit back the bile in his throat.

"Oh, fuck," said Eddie. "I think we have a problem here. Let me grab some disks, and we'll go back and let the sept know this place needs taking down." He moved over to one of the desktops sitting in a corner when suddenly, a door on the other side of the room burst open. Two men dressed in navy security uniforms ran into the room, aiming what looked like submachine guns at the werewolves.

Zophia shrieked and leapt at one, going for his throat. The other took aim and fired a burst at Eddie, who let out a yell as his body stretched and grew into a hulking wolf-man form with thin white fur and shining crimson eyes. He flinched in pain as one of the bullets found its mark.

"Silver!" he roared. "Kill them!"

Andrea growled a warning at Ian. "They're in the know, armed with silver. Take 'em down fast." She let out a cry like a bird, a loon maybe, and the one who'd shot Eddie suddenly collapsed to the floor, writhing in a sort of seizure, frothing at the mouth and burbling to himself. Ian didn't hesitate; he jumped on the man and began to beat the shit out of him, almost gleefully. Blood spurted from where Zophia was busily tearing out the larynx of the one she'd jumped, but in his death throes, he squeezed off a shot that hit right in her gut. Moaning in pain, she stumbled off his body and stag-

gered a few steps away. It took Eddie only a single stride to reach her and pick her up, the silvery wolf seeming to weigh almost nothing in his immense arms. With a free hand, he snatched up a pile of computer disks he'd spotted on one of the counters.

"Get out of here," he snarled. "I'm okay. I bring her." His thick throat garbled the words, but Ian could make them out well enough. Andrea pushed him towards the shiny wall dispenser that held paper towels, and before he knew it, he stood in the shadow world again. Eddie had already passed through, and he was running as fast as he could back the way they'd come. Panting, they cleared the building's perimeter, dodging the spiders that were now awake and alerted by the smell of blood. Only when they were some blocks away did they slow down.

"Dammit!" cursed Eddie. "How the hell did they know we were there?"

"I think there's more going on than meets the eye," sighed Andrea, "especially since they managed to hold their shit at the sight of you and get off a few pot shots with the silver ammo." She stroked Zophia. "How is she?"

To their surprise, the wolf spoke softly. "All right. Put me down." They all stared as she regained her feet, a little wobbly but still standing, and spat out some kind of weed. "My lucky day. I bring my own medicine." Zophia licked the wound that had stopped bleeding, just above her inner hindquarters. "Ouch."

Eddie again wore his human form. "Dammit, you scared me to death! I thought you were a goner."

Zophia managed a pained chuckle. "Not first to think that. Not last. Home now."

• • •

Later that night, Andrea and Ian walked back to the car, where the Galliard was surprised to notice no one had bothered it. His friend gave him a wink as she got in and revved the engine, and Ian could have sworn she tugged some beetles off the door handles. She pulled out and headed back towards the sept.

"You did good, kid, for your first raid with some New Moons. Glad you were there in the fight."

Ian shrugged. "Why didn't we hang around, finish them off?"

"Well... I think it was Eddie's call, and he wanted to gather information more than he wanted to kick ass. But rest assured, we're not done with that place yet. Sometimes, we have to pull back, think things over, before forging ahead with a good plan. At least, that's what we Ragabash believe. He'll go over those disks and pass on the info. And then we go back and clean the place out. Armed with the details, we can do a much better job than trying to take 'em down on the fly."

## *Our Selves*

They drove a long while in silence. It *wasn't such a bad day*, thought the Fianna. He'd met a Glass Walker and a Silver Fang and found them both more and less of what he'd expected. For some reason, Ian had thought the lofty Silver Fangs wouldn't speak to a lowly Bone Gnawer, but Zophia had seemed genuinely fond of Andrea. Likewise, he'd thought the Glass Walkers would be covered in wires and electrodes or something, but Eddie seemed kind of normal, aside from being a metis. It was all still strange to him. The chance to let loose some of his fury on the man that shot Eddie had given him a chill of pleasure, and he was surprised to find he wanted to go back and do some more damage.

"Penny for your thoughts, kid." Andrea's soft voice broke into his mental reverie.

"Not much thinking going on," Ian replied. "Thanks for letting me talk to some New Moons. They were really cool. And for letting me get in on some action."

"I thought you'd like them. Of course, it's not coincidence that I also wanted you to meet a lupus and a metis. I know you've met some at the sept, but they're all Fianna. Outside your own tribe, things can be pretty different. If you're going to serve your pack as an emissary, that pretty face and sweet tongue are only gonna get you so far." She sighed. "My point is, it's not just about being wolf or human. It's about being wolf *and* human. Maybe we don't understand the whole balance thing as well as a Philodox, but you spend some time watching any of the three breeds. In the wild, wolves play with each other, as pups and even as adults. They like to have fun, and cunning is part of their way of life. The same is true of humans, and although I know it's not really the Fianna way, but you shouldn't overlook the metis, either. They most of all need a little cheer and laughter. Gaia knows it's pretty rare in their lives. So, young Moon Dancer, do this old mentor a favor, and promise me that at least once in your life, you'll sing a merry song for a down-and-out metis."

Ian nodded. "I promise."

"Fair enough." Talk ceased for a while longer, then as they turned onto the dirt road to reach the caern, she spoke again. Ian couldn't be sure, but he thought he heard something odd in her voice, a tremor maybe, or a note of melancholy. Then it was gone.

"Blaze told me something about you, Gleam in His Eye. When you returned from your Rite of Passage, she said Dana whispered to her in a dream. I don't know the whole of it, but from what was implied, I think you're gonna be one of the great ones. Do me another favor, huh? When you're leading some big pack and

doing grand deeds, sing a song for me. Recall my exploits, large and small alike. Don't forget that we spent more than one day of fun in the Big Easy." With that, her serious mood was gone, the sober eyes suddenly flashing with life and laughter.

*The Galliard, Fears No Chance, stared silently into the fire a moment as she prepared to end the tale. "Here at this very caern, not so many moons ago, my mentor gave me the klaive that once belonged to Andrea. He described her as one with 'the skill of a warrior, the patience of a judge and the wordcraft of a Moon Dancer.' I have heard his words to me about other tribes, other auspices, other changers, even Andrea herself, and I know he is carrying on the tradition of teaching that she imparted. But what Gleam in His Eye could not say was how he loved her as his own sister, and that he had tried for many months to speak a tale of her glory, her honor and her wisdom, yet felt the hurt too deeply. I felt his pain at her passing, and I thought long on how I could pay homage to her memory. My tale has only been the briefest glimpse into this New Moon's life, but perhaps it may be an open door to invite our esteemed elder to begin his own story, his own healing."*

Silence fell hard and deep around the circle then, and Erin remained still as she saw the shadow of a tall figure move to stand in front of her. Had she overstepped her bounds?

A quick glance saw his strong face glowering atop his scarred and muscled frame. But even as her head instinctively dipped in apology, she saw it wasn't fury that contorted his visage, but grief.

"You honor me with a Moon Dancer's tale," he whispered to his student, "yet cut me with a Moonless rebuke." He waved off her denial, then looked up, surveying the assembly through welling eyes. "It is as she says, though I believed none outside my old sept knew the story of her life or her death. As moons stretched to years, I have hoarded the No-Moon's memory, sharing nothing of her greatness, and that is one of the three great sins of a Moon Dancer.

"I've heard the death howls all too often in my life, but the one for my first teacher was silver-edged. In my pain, I did not have the courage to tell of..." he paused, head bowed, before continuing. "I dishonored her spirit, I failed her memory. But," and his voice grew stronger, "my promise isn't broken yet. I swear before you all, when next we meet, we howl for Andrea, Laughs-to-the-Dawn!"

## *Fun and Games: Storyteller Perspectives*

Neverwise the New Moon padded through the meadow in the moments before dawn, her grin stretched wider than usual, though her mouth was full. Her Moon Dancer packmate knew her way around a tale, and she was tenacious at digging up the dirt... once she knew there was

something to find, and where to look. Erin knew better than ask where Neverwise got her information, but had learned to follow the hints she dropped. A favor collected in New Orleans, a visit at the Bayou Endormi sept, some judicious eavesdropping... and now an old wound could heal, the sept would have a new name to inspire it and a spirit could rest a little bit easier. Finding a suitable spot, the New Moon lupus dug into the cool, stony soil. At the moment the sunrise caught the clouds above on fire, she dropped the ripped, stained cowboy boot into the hole and quickly refilled the opening, packing it with a circling dance. She howled once, then cocked her head. In the distance, she was certain she heard a dim answering howl that broke apart and tumbled into heartfelt laughter. Grinning even wider, the No-Moon trotted back to her packmates, warmed by the notion that some teachers just don't take death for an answer.

Welcome to the somewhat mad and illogical world of the Ragabash, a place where good players and inventive Storytellers can bring some grins to the usually grim world of werewolves, as well as provoke some thought. Playing a New Moon has a unique set of challenges and rewards. Here are some guidelines for Storytellers in bringing out the best in the Ragabash for all players.

### *Raising the Goofball Syndrome*

The biggest pitfall that players and Storytellers can fall into is treating the Ragabash like some sort of comic relief goofball. Yes, it's certainly true that this auspice has a duty and obligation to bring in humor and relieve tension, but that's just not the same as intentionally acting stupid all the time. In fact, it's really more of a secondary duty at best. Lighthearted and prankish isn't synonymous with playing dumb; in fact, a lot of actors say that doing comedy is much harder and requires a lot more on-the-feet thinking than drama. So how do you balance the levity with the lessons the Ragabash is driven to impart?

First of all, take time to talk to the player who wants to try out a New Moon. Ask him what he envisions as the character's role in the pack and the story overall. Challenge him to come up with some examples or ideas for what he'd like the character to do within the group. As Storyteller, give him some situations where he can try out using humor in the ways a Ragabash should, as a means of bringing in a new way of thinking, keeping peace or making tempers cool down.

### *Encouraging Questions*

The traditional role of the Ragabash is serving as a "questioner of the ways." Stealth and trickery have an important place in their lives, but the Ragabash's

key responsibility is to challenge assumptions and bring in new ideas. One good literary example is Odysseus (called Ulysses by the Romans). He wasn't a comedian — he was sort of a revolutionary thinker. Sure, it was trickery to hide a bunch of Greeks in a Trojan Horse, but there was more wisdom there than humor. This can be a really useful way for a new player to get involved. Maybe the sept leader has assigned the New Moon to the troupe's pack as a means to goad them into some action and get them working against the Wyrm or the Weaver. In other words, the Ragabash can light a fire under their butts and get them moving. Clever Storytellers can also use the Ragabash to involve the other players in various plot hooks by dropping a bug in the New Moon's ear. If she's heard rumors of fomori hanging around the local feed yard, she can pass that information on to her packmates... and the adventure begins.

### *When It Doesn't Work Out*

Arguably, the Ragabash is one of the hardest auspices to play well. While they may hold important sept positions, it is uncommon that they are the greatest leaders or the best warriors. Some players may revel in the chance to play a character without all the responsibilities of being at the forefront of every fight or moot; there's a lot to be said for being active in other ways besides slashing foes and planning the future. Still, a lot of players may not have the patience or the subtlety to do the Ragabash justice. They may decide that this auspice isn't a good fit for them... or you may come to the same conclusion. Also, consider the kind of chronicle you have. One that is a combination of adventure "types" is probably going to have more to offer the Ragabash than straight hack and slash week after week.

A couple of options are available. If the player likes the character but not the auspice, there's always the Rite of Renunciation. As with changing any other auspice, there's going to be a certain amount of scorn and distrust associated with such a move, not the least of which will be the troubles with Luna that come from rejecting her intents. Another possibility is allowing the player to start over with a character that's more to her liking and interests. Whatever you decide, try to make it a choice that suits the player, the troupe and the chronicle.

### *Archetypes*

Perhaps more than the other auspices, the Ragabash conveys a typecast image, that of a joker, trickster and comedian. In reality, she's far more complex than that. Here's some exploration of both that typical image plus the other shoes the New Moon might wear.

### *The Domestic Opposition Leader*

The Domestic Opposition Leader (DOL) takes her role as a “questioner of the ways” most seriously. She’s not really bucking to become top wolf, but to an outsider, it certainly looks that way. Every time the leader makes a proposal or plan, this Ragabash is right there at his elbow to poke holes in it. She plays out various scenarios again and again to envision all the possibilities—and then she describes them repeatedly in detail. Note that the DOL isn’t really disrespectful, but she’s certainly not afraid to stand up and make her views known.

What the DOL needs is a bit more tact. Her ideas are generally excellent, and her heart is definitely in the right place; thanks to her insights, no doubt many of her pack and sept have survived potentially deadly situations. But she’d find that more of the elders would welcome her if she weren’t so pushy and one-sided; often, she’s so busy pointing out the flaws of a strategy, she forgets to comment on the good parts.

The DOL of the “waning” moon is a pessimist. She’s still got a sense of fun and a sharp wit, but it’s of the gallows humor variety. She’s more the type to be a little smug and say “I told you so.” By contrast, the “waxing” moon DOL is sort of an eager beaver; she sometimes thinks three steps ahead and expects everyone to keep up. It’s hard to get angry at one so cheerful, even when she’s pointing out problems and errors.

### *The Peacekeeper*

Although peacekeeping is generally the prerogative of the Half-Moons, this Ragabash takes it on himself to bear the burden of everyone’s troubles, and thus keep the harmony of the pack or sept intact. He’s both pitiable and amusing in that he’s always apologizing for everyone else’s mistakes. The Peacekeeper is also a bit of a “sufferer for a cause” in that he’s sometimes willing to take blame for other’s transgressions to maintain an even keel in the sept or pack—the classic omega wolf.

Generally, the rest of the werewolves don’t hold anything against the Peacekeeper. But they’d doubtless respect him more if he had more of a backbone and stood up and defended his beliefs and point of view rather than just trying to smooth ruffled feathers. To be more successful, then, the Peacekeeper needs to develop a spine and also the wisdom to know when to be humble and when to stick up for what he thinks is right and fair. Instead of always asking forgiveness on behalf of others, he needs to be more active in getting those who disagree to work it out among themselves, with the Peacekeeper serving as a good-natured mediator who keeps things lighthearted.

The Peacekeeper of the waxing moon strikes some werewolves as falsely cheerful. She’s always putting a happy face on even the worst situations, and ever willing to bear angry backslaps when others get frustrated with her ever-jolly spirits. The Peacekeeper born under the waning moon is more gloom and doom. She blames herself for things that go wrong and is a willing scapegoat. While her attitude can deflate tensions, her septmates definitely tire of her dejection and glumness.

### *The Trendsetter*

The Trendsetter is the ultimate “avant garde” among werewolves. His idea of keeping things lively is being a bit of a radical, in everything from social practices to downtime at the sept. Of course he’s not out to break any truly sacred traditions, but he’s all for finding new ways to do things. For example, he might propose that all the offices of the sept be taken over by the New Moons for a month, to see if any new innovations are born, or that the Ahroun who comes to him for a Rite of Accomplishment go on a particularly touchy-feely spirit quest.

Generally, the Trendsetter has great ideas, but his reputation as a Ragabash and a bit of an oddball work against him. Werewolves are steeped in tradition, and many are reluctant to consider new ways of thinking. To gain trust and respect, the Trendsetter needs not only to come up with innovative schemes, he also has to serve as an example and show that they can work and serve a useful purpose.

The Trendsetter birthed under the waning moon finds it much easier to break the rules than one born under the waxing moon. He’ll not necessarily defy the Litany, but neither is he afraid to question it openly and suggest that it was created in another time for a different type of werewolf. The waxing moon Trendsetter focuses on less sacred issues, such as the treatment of Kin or dealings between tribes.

### *The Sneaky Scout*

The secondary roles of the Ragabash have long been those of an expert tracker and infiltrator; as the Garou’s situation becomes more desperate in these dark years, many New Moons spend more time scouting behind enemy lines than questioning elders at the caern. The Ragabash runs ahead of the pack, watchful for obstacles and opportunities alike; he slips in and out of guarded installations, bringing back intelligence and stolen trinkets and gear for his packmates to use against their enemies.

Sometimes, the Sneaky Scout gets so caught up in the role of serving as spy, she forgets the big picture and task at hand. When packmates are anxiously waiting

for surveillance info, she might be off gathering way more than is actually needed. To be the most help to her pack, the Sneaky Scout needs a little more focus and self-discipline.

When a waxing moon serves as a scout, she *really* gets into the role, right down to spouting some cliched one liners and, depending on the tribe, using various high-tech equipment and gizmos. The waning moon seems to enjoy inflicting collateral damage more than most, and more often than not, her scouting missions end with a fair bit of bloodshed, usually on the enemy's side. Some waning moon Ragabash have trademark "calling cards" that are sort of their signature that they've made a stop and wreaked some havoc.

### *The Stereotypical Trickster*

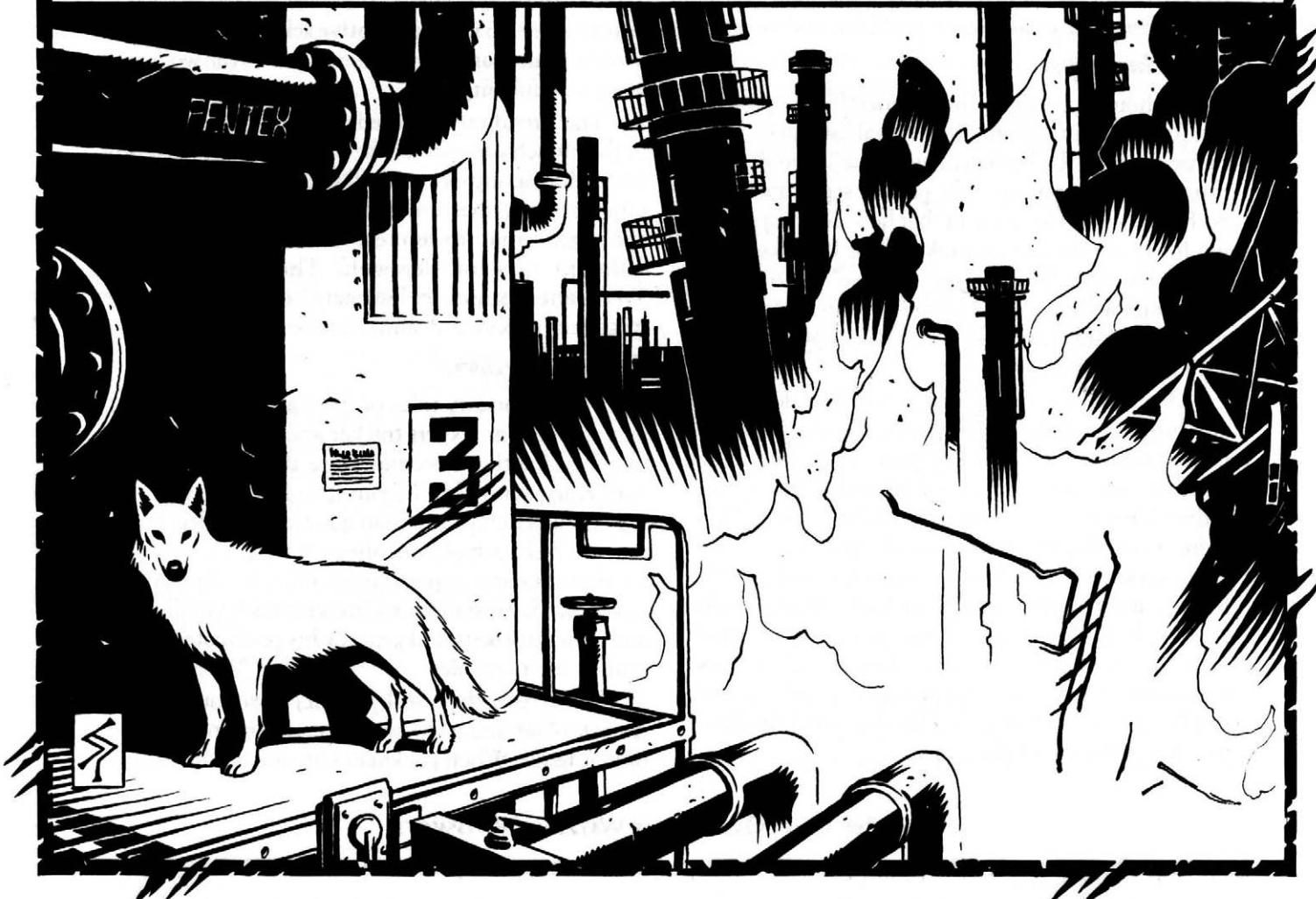
To deny that the Ragabash's reputation as a trickster and comedian is deserved discredits Luna's designated role for the auspice. Myth and legend abound with examples of tricksters who, by their antics, share great wisdom. From the Norse, there's Loki; from various Native Americans come Fox, Coyote and Raven. The Stereotypical Trickster werewolf inherits this long tradition. From his pranks, he shows the pack new ways of tackling a problem. His laughter can lighten the burden of sorrow, and his willingness to serve as a scapegoat alleviates simmering tensions.

Of course, all those jokes tend to make others wary of the Ragabash. Sept members often can't tell when he's actually trying to be serious or sincere, so they fall back on the stereotype to know how to react. When meeting a Ragabash for the first time, others often make assumptions about his behavior, and there're likely a few shreds of distrust lurking beneath the surface. The Stereotypical Trickster's task is to remain true to himself and his function in Garou society while also convincing others that he can and will be stern and earnest when such a mood is truly needed.

If a Stereotypical Trickster is born close to the waxing of a new moon, he's more happy-go-lucky and lighthearted. His pranks and jokes are good-natured and usually don't involve anything terribly underhanded or devious. The Trickster of the waning moon has a more sinister sense of humor. His tricks may border on the tasteless and crude, and instead of gently teaching a lesson or imparting wisdom, he's not above some bullying and tail biting to get his point across.

### *New Ragabash Ciffs*

- **Hush (Level One)** — Though Ragabash are teachers, one thing they can't always teach is when to keep one's mouth shut. Maybe a brash Ahroun is about to say something unfortunate to a bigger Ahroun, or



perhaps a talkative cub is about to reveal too much about what she knows. In such situations, this Gift acts as a temporary stopgap; it makes the target fumble for words, lose his train of thought or become momentarily distracted. Besides keeping friends from saying stupid things, the Gift can also be used against insulting rivals or the fomori calling in reinforcements. Because of the bond between packmates, it is easier to use this Gift within the pack — after all, it's for the greater good, right? A mockingbird-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty is the target's Wits + 4; for a packmate reduce the difficulty by one). Every success stalls the target for one turn, preventing the target from communicating verbally (although other forms of communication, such as sign language or writing, are still possible).

• **Trickster Beacon (Level Two)** — Known as the "Kick Me Gift" by particularly irreverent New Moons, this places a spiritual beacon on the unwitting target, attracting the local troublemaking spirits. While potentially lethal pranks are off limits, anything else is fair game: items are moved or lost temporarily, the target is surrounded by jeering spirits in the Umbra or momentarily loses his way in familiar territory. The beacon cannot be removed or hidden (and the target can never see it although all spirits and perceptive Garou can), but an eloquent and lucky victim may be able to "buy off" the spirits with the appropriate chiminage. This Gift is taught by any trickster spirit.

**System:** The Ragabash expends a point of Gnosis and touches the target (a pat on the back or handshake do as well as a punch). The player rolls Wits + Enigmas (difficulty is the target's Rank +2; difficulty 5 for non-shapeshifters). The Gift effects last for one day per success. A botch marks the Ragabash instead (the unfortunate must roll against himself to determine how long the plague of spirits lasts, and a botch on the second roll means a full lunar month). Even spirits agree there is such a thing as carrying a prank too far. A Ragabash who uses this Gift more than once per lunar month or against a given individual more than once per season risks becoming the target of the spirits' attention (subtract one success from the die roll for each consecutive use of the Gift).

• **Slip of the Tongue (Level Two)** — Sensing the truth is the purview of the Half Moon, but the trickster is adept at obtaining admissions of guilt, however accidental. By engaging in a conversation (heated or otherwise), the user of this Gift can make the target accidentally remark on what she wished to hide ("of course I had everything to do with his death... I mean, nothing to do with it!" or "The necklace isn't here, search all you like, but don't bother with the study,

that's so obvious!") The slip may only arouse already suspicious minds, but it may fluster the target enough to cause some more tangible admission of guilt, like a confession or an attack. This Gift is taught by a Gaffling of Falcon or by any truth spirit.

**System:** The Ragabash must engage the target in a conversation relating to the suspected crime or action. The player and target make a resisted Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, difficulty of the opponent's Willpower. One success allows a subtle slip only noticeable to the already suspicious, while five results in the spilling of damning information no judge could discount.

• **Impunity (Level Three)** — One of the Ragabash's jobs is to voice uncomfortable truths. Unfortunately, not all tolerate that role, and those who most need to hear the truth are often least willing to listen. No Moons must be quick on their feet to avoid a furious elder who's been called on the carpet by a subordinate. With this Gift, the Garou may tell a respected leader he screwed up without becoming the dead messenger. The Gift is taught by a cat-spirit.

**System:** By succeeding in a Charisma + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6), the Ragabash can avoid the worst repercussions of his statements. The target(s) must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6 plus the No Moon's successes) to punish or attack the speaker for the rest of the scene. Each attempted use of this Gift in the span of a lunar month adds an additional +1 to the No Moon's difficulty. Note that whatever the Ragabash says must be clearly and completely true from the user's point of view — no prevarication or double entendres are possible. For example, "Your nephew broke the Litany" would work if said Garou ate a policeman, but not if he failed to respect a Black Spiral's territory. (Though a simple opinion, such as "You're being an idiot," is acceptable if heartfelt). The Storyteller is the final arbiter. If the Ragabash attempts to misuse this impressive Gift, not only will he not realize it didn't work until after he speaks, but Cat will make her displeasure evident.

• **The Usual Suspects (Level Three)** — The wary Ragabash often wants to keep tabs on others, whether to know the location of a wandering cub or trail a suspicious government agent. The Usual Suspects allows the user to know the general whereabouts of several subjects at any time. Owl-spirits or urban spirits of Wisdom teach this Gift.

**System:** The Ragabash can keep tabs on a number of individuals equal to her Gnosis rating. To choose a target, the New Moon must either have an unobstructed view or have a strong scent trail of the target and make a Gnosis roll (difficulty 7). Thereafter, by spending a Gnosis point and concentrating for three turns (the player rolls Perception + Enigmas, difficulty 8 for physi-

cal beings or Gnosis rating for spirits) the Ragabash can sense the general location of the target. Successes increase accuracy; one success would give "Southwest, a mile or two away," while five would allow "South-southwest, 1.3 miles, on the porch of his house." If the Garou already has a maximum number of targets saved, she must "lose" one before acquiring another.

• **Madness Season (Level Four)** — A fine line often exists between madcap humor and the precipice of insanity. The New Moon's understanding of this boundary enables her to send enemies teetering off the brink into lunacy. While this Gift does no lasting harm to the victim, it can make him an object of ridicule and scorn... and grant a measure of respect to the Ragabash who uses it. Any spirit of Luna can teach this Gift.

**System:** The player expends one Gnosis point and makes a resisted Manipulation + Subterfuge roll against the target's Willpower. One success causes the victim to become gibbering and helpless in a fit of madness for a number of turns equal to the Ragabash's Gnosis rating; three successes causes the madness to last the remainder of the scene. With Storyteller's discretion, four or more successes may render the victim incoherent for a longer period of time.

• **Turn the Moon (Level Five)** — This Gift essentially makes a werewolf "walk a mile in someone else's shoes." For a short period of time, the New Moon can change the auspice of another werewolf to whatever she deems appropriate. Any spirit of Luna can teach this Gift.

**System:** The Ragabash spends a Willpower point, and the player rolls Manipulation + Primal Urge. For each success, the target must spend a day in his new auspice. The Ragabash can end the effects of the Gift earlier, if she so chooses. The target loses access to specific auspice Gifts, gains or loses enough temporary Rage points to bring him to the base minimum for the appropriate auspice, and suddenly finds his thinking influenced by the duties of the new auspice. For example, if the Ragabash changes an Ahroun into a Philodox, he'll start trying to lead by example, feel an urge to settle disputes and try to bring things around him into balance (an opportunity for some fun and creative roleplaying). The New Moons of rank use this Gift to teach a lesson to those taking the duties of their auspice too much to heart, and it can be *quite* effective at showing them a different perspective.

• **Weakest Link (Level Five)** — With this Gift, a New Moon can delve into the hearts and minds of a given pack. He can sense the fears and concerns of either friends or enemies to best help or harm them. Armed with this knowledge, the Ragabash can guide

his own pack in attacking foes or use his own peculiar brand of wisdom to facilitate peace and healing. Any Weaver spirit can teach this Gift.

**System:** After spending a Willpower point, the player rolls Perception + Enigmas. With each success above one, he can find out crucial information on two packmembers per success. For example, with two successes, he can target two packmembers; with three, he can learn about four packmembers. The Storyteller should word things in a descriptive way; she needn't give specific rank or auspice, for example, but might point out who's leading and who's following. Moreover, this Gift can clue in a Ragabash on specific fears or phobias he can best use to his advantage. At the Storyteller's discretion, he might also discern the ranking of pack members, who has the most Rage and Gnosis, and possibly certain Merits or Flaws. Storytellers should be generous, as this is a rare and powerful Gift.

• **Firebringer (Level Six)** — This powerful Gift allows a Ragabash to pull the ultimate stunt, stealing a supernatural power and turning it into a Gift. Moreover, the Gift can be taught to others, as if the New Moon was a spirit teacher. The difficult part is that the Ragabash has to endure having the power used on her first, but after that, she makes it her own to teach, but alas, not to use herself. A powerful spirit, such as the avatar of a trickster Incarna, teaches this Gift.

**System:** Survival, smarts and sacrifice are key to acquiring this Gift, though no specific dice rolls are needed. First, the Ragabash must suffer through the effects of the power (such as a vampiric Discipline or a mage's rote) being successfully used on her. Then, she can take her experiences, work with the appropriate spirit and turn the power into a Gift she can teach to others. The Ragabash cannot herself use the Gift, and moreover, she now has a vulnerability to its effects. The next time she encounters another supernatural using the power, the enemy is at one difficulty less to use it on the New Moon (the power more easily affects the Ragabash). Any supernatural power can be co-opted in this way, including Wyrm-tainted powers. In this way, the werewolves can turn the might of the Wyrm back on itself. Because of the sacrifice involved, the New Moon usually gains considerable Renown for not only "stealing" the knowledge of the supernatural power, but also teaching it to others. Storytellers should feel free to be creative and innovative in bringing powers from other games (such as *Vampire* and *Mage*) into the Werewolf universe. The Storyteller determines the level of any Gift gained in this manner, as appropriate.

## *New Rite of Accord*

### *Rite of the Omega*

Level Three

It is often the duty of the Ragabash to add levity and defuse a tense situation. When division and anger threatens the unity of the sept, some Ragabash choose the dangerous and often sacrificial Rite of the Omega. Once it is performed successfully, the ritemaster becomes reviled; everything she says or does steps on the last nerve of everyone in the sept (plus any visitors there at the time the rite begins). Elders put her to work and punish her for being slack, and the Ahroun want to practice their Ragabash-throwing skills. Even the lowest metis says, "Sucks to be you." The ritemaster will be driven from kills, suffer beatings if she isn't quick and may even have her gear stolen or damaged for spite's sake. Even her own pack treats her like dirt. All the tension and hate and anger that threatened to tear the sept apart is now directed at one individual, bringing unity and catharsis to the Garou. The effects last a minimum of one day, although for an ongoing situation the Ragabash may continue to play the ultimate omega to ensure harmony.

**System:** Using her own blood mixed with the soil from the caern site, the ritemaster inscribes the Garou glyph for Shame on her chest and intones a chant. If successful, the Ragabash drops to Rank One for the duration of the rite.

If the tension in the sept is the result of a singular event (a death, a divisive challenge, etc), the rite's effects last a single day. In the case of an ongoing crisis (intercept negotiations or a heated concilation), the rite may last as long as a week. At the end of the rite, the glyph disappears and the Ragabash's Rank is restored, plus 3 temporary Honor (up to 5 for an extended rite) and hopefully some decent treatment to make up for the sacrifice. The sept members will be more inclined to compromise and have greater understanding of opposing views, staying unified for a time.

The put-upon ritemaster may end the rite prematurely simply by wiping the glyph away and shouting "I've had enough!" but loses 2 Honor and 1 Wisdom, and worse, the sept loses all benefits of the rite.

This is specifically a Ragabash ritual; any other auspice (assuming they can find a teacher) has a +2 difficulty to the roll and gains or loses only 1 Honor.

## *New Fetishes*

### *Pinch Bugs*

Level 1, Gnosis 3

Pinch bugs are fetishes that appear to be some kind of larger insect — ladybugs, bumblebees or mantises, for example — crafted from clay and often painted garish colors. A werewolf can stick one of these little bugs to an item he wants to protect from casual snooping, activating the fetish as it is attached. When anyone but the werewolf tries to open or disturb the item in question, the pinch bug comes to life and "stings" the offender. This is nonlethal, but it's exceedingly painful, like the worst wasp sting imaginable. If the offender has some compelling reason to remain silent, he must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, to avoid screeching or hurling some kind of expletive at the top of his lungs.

### *Loki's Fire*

Level 4, Gnosis 7

This fetish usually appears as a fiery red stone about the size of a human's palm, similar in color to a carnelian. When activated with the expenditure of a Gnosis point (a simple roll will not activate a fetish of this potency), it allows the wielder to raise her Manipulation by two points for the duration of a scene. Ideally, the user takes this opportunity to successfully perform a prank or somehow use the advantage in a way the stone's namesake would approve. A spirit of deceit is often the source of the fetish's power.

### *New Talen*

### *Face Paint*

Gnosis 7

Face Paint can take on a number of appearances, from pancake makeup to rich ochre mud, usually depending on the cultural background of its maker. It's an extremely useful fetish, as it can temporarily obfuscate the wearer's appearance. When activated, the paint can simply make the user appear more or less beautiful (raising or lowering Appearance by two points), or give the wearer different facial features entirely. A person with dark skin and brown eyes might, for example, choose to have blue eyes and tan skin. The changes aren't present anywhere except in the face, but this is quite a useful item to have when impersonating someone. The effects last for a scene.



# Chapter Two: Keepers of The Holy Mysteries

*Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed.*

— Francis Bacon

## *The Crescent Moon*

Anjou 'Annie' Patchquilt hated ethnic stereotypes with a burning passion. She hated the vaguely greasy feel to the air on the Rez that made everybody sweat more than they naturally should. She hated the tattered Salvation Army clothing she provided to her daughters and nephews. She hated the peeling wallpaper and the angry brown water stains on the plasterboard walls of her cramped home. Most of all, she hated that whenever some white man looked at her, he'd see just another dirty Native woman in poor clothes. So she worked, with a quiet desperation, to keep her home as neat, as sanitary and livable, as she possibly could with what she had. This was often like trying to hold back a mudslide with a teacup, but she never stopped trying.

Right now, she was scrubbing at her dinner table viciously with a steel wool pad, trying to remove splotches of Kraft Macaroni sauce that had dried like enamel half a year ago. It was cathartic, in a way — the repetitive motion was soothing to her nerves. It helped her forget about things. All of this would be easier, she reasoned, if her people didn't have a tribe of werewolves suckling off their already meager resources like bloated ticks. Quickly, she castigated herself. She had seen the Garou do a lot of courageous things in her life, helping people and giving of themselves. Not all of them were like Speaks-With-Shadows. Her fingers tensed,

and she realized she had scratched her hand with the steel wool, but she didn't care. Arrogant, paternalistic, bullying, cruel, manipulative — it was true. She hated all the damn Theurges and their spirit friends too.

In a way, she reasoned, it was insulting to her intelligence. Anjou had never been a particularly nature-loving person, and she found it outright patronizing that the werewolves would expect her to revere their nature spirits just because her skin was as brown as theirs. Like on TV, where every Native American had a deep and empathic bond with animals and with "the Spirit of the Land" — along with a tomahawk and feathered headdress. Anjou considered herself a practical woman — by that meaning that she cared far more about her people's future than their past. The Uktena would never accept that, of course, but the very least they could do was mind their own business and keep their bloody spirituality to themselves rather than forcing it on others.

Don't think about it, she told herself. You'll only get depressed, and you have work to do. A harsh rapping at her door interrupted her reverie.

"Go away," she shouted back, her voice revealing more of her anguish than she would ever normally allow.

"We need to talk, Anjou." She knew that voice — it was Aaron Fourpaws, one of the Philodox from the sept by the river. She thought about pressing for solitude, but the last thing she wanted was to get more Garou angry at her, so she sighed deeply, straightened her tangled black hair and let her guest in with whatever composure she could muster.

"The things you said at Silverman's Bar last night — about Speaks-With-Shadows and Uktena — they're getting around."

"It's a free society, isn't it? I can say what I damned well please!"

"No," Aaron said, with a vague sadness in his voice, "it's not, at least not entirely. And there are many, many things the sept will not tolerate you saying in public. I'm sorry for that. What happened, anyway, to get you spewing such poison at Shadows and her spirits?"

Anjou sighed, and it was filled with humiliation. Aaron would have offered her comfort, but he did not know how. "I'd might as well tell you; after all, if you don't hear it from me you'll hear it from my 'friends.' A year and a half ago, I met a beautiful, regal gentleman named Phillippe Rouchard, and we fell very passionately in love."

Anjou held callused hands up beside split hair and a face lined by sorrow and poverty. "He thought I was beautiful, Aaron. He was my dream, my passion and my one opportunity to live a life with more dignity than I have right now. Shadows came to me. She literally appeared out of nowhere one night while I was watching TV, no doubt expecting to cow me with the magic of Stepping Sideways, like I'm some ignorant peasant. I've never felt alone since then, you know — I've always known that one of you could be in the Umbra by my house, spying on me, and I'd never be able to sense it in a million years. That bitch took away my security forever. Anyway, she doesn't even bother to introduce herself. She just tells me that Mother Uktena has looked upon the fruit of my union with Phillippe and found it to be inauspicious, and that I am to separate from him immediately and select a different mate from within the Rez. Then she vanishes again. No explanation, no counsel, just a dictum. I guess that's all humans are worth to a Theurge, right?"

"No. Not at all, I swear. But please continue."

Anjou scowled. "Surely you've heard the rest, already. This place is worse than the smallest town that way. I stayed with Phillippe and got knocked up. He vanished into thin air when I was five months pregnant. The children were born wrong, and the last one died in intensive care the day before I was at the bar. Now, I can't even grieve in peace — everyone I thought was my friend here is snickering behind my back at how foolish I was, not to just shut up and obey the spirits like a good little lackey. And I've lost my future, that once looked so bright. So that's my sob story; I'd rather not rehash the gory details. All that bloody old crone would have had to do was offer some explanation, some justification, beyond 'your lover is unclean.'

"Look, this is my point. I respect most of your people, I really do. But I think your Theurges are full of shit. My grandfather was raised in one of those 'special' Catholic schools they had back then for Natives — surely you've heard about them? I heard about everything he went through, how people used religion to bludgeon our people and keep us ignorant, and truthfully I see the same thing happening with your Theurges. You even hear about it from other Garou, how they're dabbling in things they aren't supposed to be and are eventually going to get burnt. I've had to sacrifice so much in my life because the Garou are at war with the Wyrm. If that war is so important, why do you waste so much of your resources on paying debts to spirits and guarding sacred places? Maybe it's different for you, but where I'm standing all you're doing is kowtowing to a bunch of dogmatic bullies and bloated parasite-gods. So yeah, I stand by everything I said in the bar."

### *The First Theurge*

Aaron opened his mouth to speak, but the words caught. There wasn't much one could say in response to something like that. This was going to be harder to resolve than he had initially thought. Mentally, he cursed Speaks-With-Shadows, but he wasn't about to admit that.

"Please don't think of us as bullies or dictators, Anjou. I appreciate your pain, and I understand why you feel hurt by Speaks-With-Shadows. Believe me, I want to try and make this mess right, not just shove it under the rug. You are certainly not the first person to feel condescended to by a Theurge, or to feel that one of the Crescent Moons did ill unto you. Theurges are well known for being enigmatic, manipulative and even deceitful. But they have their reasons for being what they are, and I had hoped I could help you understand them better. So why do we have Theurges, you ask? What do they do for us? Let me start at the beginning, then."

"All the tribes have legends about the first Theurge, and many claim him or her as one of their own. It's remarkable, though — while the details of every legend are different, the basic framework is exactly the same. I do believe that there is some kernel of truth to these legends, but I don't expect you to do so. For now, please, just listen. There are always six stages to the story: Alienation, Transgression, Signs and Omens, Communication, Sacrifice and Restoration. The Garou described as the first Theurge varies widely from legend to legend — sometimes a grand warrior, sometimes a lowly metis. But he is always separated from his tribe, his pack, his social circle. Sometimes he is a visionary who sees things they do not, other times he is diseased or even insane. But he is always separate, alone and not entirely normal."

"The Transgression is by far the most variable part of the story. The other Garou, in their arrogance, manage to offend the spiritual world — in the Uktena legend, for example, they run a herd of caribou to their deaths and butcher them all, leaving almost all the meat and hides to rot. The fundamental disrespect shown to the Animal Father of the caribou demonstrates the hubris of these primeval Garou very well. Other



tribes have other transgressions — for example, the Silver Fangs speak of the slaying of a just king, while the Glass Walker legend talks about the extermination of early humans; each tribe inserts their own favored moral of the story here. Regardless, Garou arrogance has managed to mortally offend the spirit worlds, and as long as this state persists, nothing good could come of our race's pursuits.

"This leads into the next section of the myth, the Signs and Omens. Slowly, the higher powers make their displeasure known. Fetish weapons shatter when used in battle. Ill luck and eerie coincidences plague these primeval Garou. Their human Kin's crops fail season after season, while their lupine Kin fall prey to hunters and predators. Eventually, since this occurs in times when the world was closer to magic, the spiritual malison becomes overwhelming: days become burning hot under Helios' glare, and nights colder than the void of space. Violent storm fronts follow the primeval Garou at Grandfather Thunder's bequest. All wounds become infected, all children are stillborn and the supernatural fabric of reality begins to actively lash out at the Garou.

"Only the Garou who is to be the First Theurge can perceive the cause of this, and his entreaties fall upon deaf ears. Remember that this was before the establishment of most of Garou spirituality, and nobody yet knew how to speak with the spirits. But the First Theurge journeys into the Umbra to try and set things right. Now he must pass many great ordeals and tests before the spirits will impart their secrets to him, and this he does, demonstrating great cunning

and wisdom in the process. For his bravery and vision, the spirits grant him the ability to speak in their tongue, and true communication between the races has begun. Once created, this is a bridge that is not easily broken; long after the first Theurge has died, Garou spiritualists will carry on the covenant he created in the learning of that simple Gift. But words alone are not enough to restore the balance, as in Garou hubris the offense has been allowed to fester and aggravate. A greater redemption is necessary.

"The Sacrifice is always mortal. Garou legends are not comfortable stories, Anjou, and the simple truth is that only with his death can the shaman placate the spirit world. No other sacrifice is great enough. Often among the more warlike tribes, his anguish is magnified many times to emphasize the martyrdom aspect — the Get Theurge is chained to a mountain while Surtur rolls glowing-hot boulders over his broken form for all eternity, for example. Did you believe that Christianity was the first religion to have a Savior absolve transgression with his own lifeblood? So much of human religion's mythology has its background or parallel in Garou stories. The first Theurge's death echoes the small death most Theurges experience during their Rite of Passage — it's a symbolic correspondence, and that counts for everything in a mystical world.

"Regardless, the balance between the worlds of spirit and flesh has been set right again, and the unnatural plagues and tragedies cease — this is the Restoration. The Garou, now able to understand the spirits, are humbled to learn of

the First Theurge's sacrifice. The primeval werewolves swear that this kind of offense to Gaia will never be allowed to become so egregious again, and to show their dedication to this, they make a covenant with Luna: All their cubs born under the crescent moon, Luna's sign of the greater mysteries, will be given over to the spirit worlds to act as emissaries and messengers for the spirits, ensuring that the Garou never fail to pay them their proper dues again."

### *The Thousand Faces*

Anjou nodded slowly as she digested the legend. "That's, uh... evocative, I guess, in a primeval way, but it still doesn't do anything to make clear to me what good the Theurges do you in real, practical matters while your warriors are dying on the front lines or your judges are enforcing tribal law. Without sounding snide, I got tired of people trying to use legends as justification for real-life matters the first time one of my tribal elders tried the whole 'you don't understand Native ways, you ignorant city child' routine on me. Appeal to mythic precedent is not a valid form of argument."

The werewolf nodded. "Fair enough. You have a sharp mind, Anjou; you would have made a good Philodox. But you can't judge the auspice by one person, no matter how potent a presence she may be in your life. Theurges are a diverse lot, and they have a lot of different roles to fill in Garou society."

### *The Priestess*

"First and foremost, Theurges are the clergy of our society — but then you knew that, right? Yet, these are not like the mortal priests and shamans you have had experience with. If anything, they are more like the ecstatic priestesses and temple monks of ancient mystery cults. Along with the normal duties of any religious authority, they are responsible for preserving the mystery and fear that surrounds the sacred."

Anjou snorted. "Keeping the Garou masses scared and in awe of them. How noble."

"Keeping the Garou reverent," Aaron corrected.

"There's a difference between sincere reverence and simple ignorance, Anjou. All Garou revere Gaia, and want to serve Her. The Theurges don't force that on anyone; they don't have to. It's innate to us in a way I really can't explain to a human. I'm sorry. We are born as spiritual beings, invested with Gnosis. But we are also proud beings; a typical Garou is more powerful than nine-tenths of the other beings she will ever deal with. Theurges ensure that our pride is never allowed to reach the point of hubris and disre-



spect to the spirits, as it did in the story of the First Theurge. A great many of our race's gravest crimes — including the Impergium and the War of Rage — are rooted in lack of respect in general. If it sometimes takes a little old-fashioned terror to remind us that we aren't the only creatures found worthy by Gaia, then in truth I'm glad we have Theurges to provide that. Spirituality provides an important kind of restraint to Garou; when we forget that reverence, bad things happen. And it takes a great deal to strike real, genuine terror into the hearts of Gaia's Chosen Warriors, given what we face on a regular basis. Some of what makes the Theurge an awe-inspiring figure is the unknown, the alien nature of what she deals with, and the fact that you never know which of your secrets a Theurge might be privy to. Moreso, though, the fear a Theurge inspires is the fear of failing in our diverse duties to Gaia. A Theurge is a living reminder to every Garou that we all have real, godlike cosmological powers looking over our shoulders, even though we can't see or touch them. Garou need that — we need to know we aren't the biggest gorilla on the block, and that we owe our loyalty to spiritual patrons far above even us."

Anjou nodded. "Religion as a checks-and-balances system to your supernatural power. I guess I can see that. But surely you don't need a fifth of your race devoted to that alone?"

### *The Messenger*

"Oh no. Most humans believe the spiritual is isolated in a far-distant land that they will only interact with at death, or in terribly rare moments of mystical experience. This isn't true for the Garou — spirits are at hand every day. Our littlest gods look over our shoulders in everything we do, and we need to have people who know the traditional rites and ancient ways — people who are qualified to talk to these living mysteries in the proper manner."

Anjou frowned skeptically. "But why all the voodoo and shit? Why bother with the rites, the sacred dances and the enigmatic puzzles? I've lived with Garou all my life; I know damned well every single werewolf has the capacity to learn how to talk coherently with spirits. Even some especially devout Kinfolk learn that trick. So why rely on Theurges instead of, say, Philodox, when they translate spirit-speech in terms of silly metaphors and enigmas?"

"I once asked a similar question of an older Strider Theurge, when I was young and inexperienced myself. This is what he said in response: Theurges never obfuscate for the sake of obfuscation. They aren't here to deceive us, but like any diplomat or linguist they have to give the proper respect to both sides of the exchange. Nothing is more anathema to a spirit than treating it like a mundane ally, a resource — like a Kin warrior or a high-up contact in the DEA. That is the Weaver's way — to imply that the only important properties of a thing are those that can be easily observed, understood and catalogued. Some things are better left unformed — or rather, formed by dreams, spirit dances and prayer instead of the banalities of anatomy and negotiation.

"My Theurge friend said that there are two kinds of truth in the world: the first, the hard truth, is that which Philodox deal with — the truth of yes or no, guilty or innocent; truth gleaned by observation and analysis. It is true, but it also obscures any higher truth that may lie beneath it. It's... literalist, for lack of a better term. The Theurges' truth, on the other hand, is a soft truth; the truth of legends, prophecies and symbols. Not everything in mythology is strictly causal, but it is there for a reason.

"Every spirit — yes, even the Banes — is a part of the higher, symbolic truth. You can't put that truth into words — that would kill it, and the Weaver would win. So the Theurges cut it into pieces, wrapping each in mystery and enigma. Then they deliver them, hoping that in solving the puzzle in search of some immediate, hard truth we will find the tiny, invaluable spark of the higher truth within — a truth they could not articulate even if they wanted to."

"At least, that's what my friend says. Really, though, it's ultimately academic — even if we wanted our Theurges to speak in a strictly rationalistic and precise manner with spirits, like official translators or something, they can't. Many, many spirits are highly elusive and enigmatic by nature, and Theurges have to speak on their level if they want to speak with them at all. Ultimately, spirits may reflect aspects of the human condition, but they are very much not like you and I; it can take a Theurge years of training and a sharp mind to relate to them on a level they can understand. All I'm trying to say is that Crescent Moons have solid reasons for being enigmatic; it isn't as if they're trying to cow the ignorant or conceal their own incompetence."

Anjou nodded. "Fair enough."

### *The Nurturer*

"Theurges do far more than just terrify and confuse, though," the Philodox said with a self-deprecating smile. Anjou smiled back in spite of herself. She seems genuinely interested, Aaron realized. That was a good sign.

"They have a way with other Garou, you see. Our Rage burns strong; they help us to nurture our Gnosis as its counterpoint. I guess you could say they exert a kind of calming influence on us, preventing Rage from overtaking reason. Although I'm sure this is hard for you to believe, in many cases they can be the most empathic of Garou — not necessarily the most perceptive of emotions; that honor goes to the Galliards — but the most willing to share in another's pain, to ease others' suffering by reminding us of our ties to our goddess. I doubt you've ever seen that side of a Theurge, Anjou. Believe me when I say they can be tremendously compassionate beings; the only problem is that some of them aren't always sure how to express that compassion without breaking down the wall of awe and reverence that surrounds their auspice."

"Theurges are also our healers. One of their most common spirit-Gifts allows them to supernaturally mend wounds, knitting flesh with a touch. But they also practice

the craft of medicine in the general sense — very few Theurges have no understanding at all of herbalism and holistic medicine. You could even say that they don't directly heal others so much as they teach others to see how nature can help them to heal themselves. In some ways, I guess, you could compare a Theurge to a classical midwife.

"Of course, many Theurges also have skill with modern medicine; some are even licensed physicians and surgeons. Remember that no part of respecting traditional ways implies that we cannot also embrace modern methods when they serve our purposes."

### *The Shepherd*

"Theurges are also tasked with conveying the spiritual knowledge to mankind, teaching humanity to perceive and revere the spirits in the same manner we do. Have you ever wondered why the Garou word for the energy of our spirit ties is the same as the humans' 'gnosis'? It is indeed a kind of secret knowledge, a gnosis, which lets us see what humanity can not. We do not just believe, or even know, that all things around us are alive — we sense it, just as you touch, hear and smell. Garou are able, on some level, to perceive the pulse of creation, and if you open yourself, so are you. The tiny thread of the spirit world accessible to mankind in this age is called the Periphery, Anjou. Theurges work to encourage humanity to expand their spiritual perceptions to see it, but so many humans just don't care enough to want to look.

"This is not about conversion, about getting humanity to call God by the 'right' name, believe our dogma or follow a given set of Commandments. Theurges are charged with bringing the worlds of spirit and flesh together again, as they were in the Dawn Times when the world was still young. Then, the Weaver's wall, the Gauntlet, will not be so strong as to block gnostic perceptions. If humanity could only perceive the spiritual world the way we can, they would be able to see the real and concrete hurt that so many of their choices cause. In a way, it's hard to blame them for wounding Gaia, because all they can see is rocks and trees and other random matter — they lack the gnosis, the secret knowledge, of animism. They can no longer see the essence of the living world around them; they don't understand the value of things, because the idea of treating trees and rivers as if they were people went out of vogue over three centuries ago."

Anjou snorted contemptuously. "I'm sorry. It's just that that sounds so hopelessly New-Agey."

Aaron shrugged. "You asked me to justify Theurges. I am not going to change my words just because your human prejudices make it difficult for you to take them seriously. Who do you think wants you to believe that everything tied to alternative religion is shallow and worthy of scorn, anyway?"

Anjou wasn't sure what to say to that. "I... don't know. It just always seemed hokey to me, I guess."

Aaron nodded slowly. "Can you imagine how hard it must be, then, to be a Theurge in this age? You have a sacred duty to teach humanity reverence for the spirit worlds, and the first

thing that comes to so many humans' minds when confronted with nature worship is that it's 'hokey'? And yet belief that one lonely prophet nailed to a cross can excuse all humanity's evils... this is a national institution. Their work is a lonely, difficult duty, and I know many Theurges who despair or ever bringing spirit and flesh close together again.

### *The Purifier*

"This is not the only duty that Theurges have in the human world, however. Indeed, they are one of the auspices required to interact heavily with human society. As well as expanding perceptions, they are charged by Luna with rooting out and healing corruption. Now, attacking and slaying the deeply corrupt — that falls to the Ahroun. But it is the Theurges who are responsible for pressing back the

### *The Fate of Evil*

Something that most Garou (and also many Werewolf players) may not realize is that killing Banes and other Wyrm creatures does not truly weaken the Wyrm in the grand scheme of things. This is not to say that the exploits of the many great Garou war-heroes are in vain — far from it. Slaying the servants of the Wyrm, as well as those simply malicious dupes that feed its power with hatred and ignorance, accomplishes much good. It protects innocents who might otherwise be harmed by their actions, prevents the impure from spreading their corruption, buys time for other Garou to work out a more lasting solution and generally contributes to a dying race's effort to hold the line against their final extinction. What it does not do, on the other hand, is actually weaken the Wyrm in the general sense. The Wyrm's potency is determined largely by the power of the corruption it represents, the faces of evil represented by the Urge Wyrms and their Maeljin Incarnae. Fomori and Banes are just agents the Wyrm uses to nurture that corruption; it's the corruption itself that gives it unholy strength, not the Banes and fomori.

And that's where Theurges (and all the other Garou who help to pursue their visions) come in. Spiritual healing, the restoration of metaphysical and psychological balance — these things are arguably undervalued by the Garou Nation (though admittedly as a people under siege, werewolves aren't in a good position to constantly take the long view). But they are nonetheless the only things that are really capable of hurting the Wyrm as an entity, as much as any such greater metaphysical force like the Wyrm can be "hurt." It's not just Theurges, of course; they're just the ones at the helm. Any Garou can take the fight to the Wyrm on a more spiritual level, and in the end all of the Garou Nation's greatest victories involve this kind of metaphorical conflict between virtues and sins, purity and corruption. After all, in the long run it's the only thing that really works.

faint touch of the Wyrm on social fabrics, healing the soul and saving those who can be saved. It's sadly ironic that your one significant encounter with a Theurge has hurt you so much, Anjou, because there are many Theurges who would consider it part of their job description to give you succor before your hurt could turn to bitterness, and then to rage and corruption."

"Not Speaks-With-Shadows, at least."

"Perhaps not. But do not paint all of her auspice with that brush — like all Garou, Theurges are individuals, and they're a diverse lot to boot. Anyway, corruption.

"It's also a Theurge's duty to find hidden corruption within the human world, albeit not solely a Theurge's duty. Ragabash and Galliards are well suited to sniffing out the mundane aspects of corruption — financial graft, legal injustice, racial hate and so on. But Theurges are uniquely equipped to spot and track mystical or psychological evils, and their networks of spirit allies often alert the Garou Nation to dangers we would never otherwise imagine existed. Theurges then purify the taint on a spiritual level — sometimes this can be as simple as using the Rite of Cleansing; other times it can involve a quest on behalf of restoring a corrupted spirit to health, or simply the spiritual equivalent of psychotherapy. A lot of Theurges spend time just talking with blighted spirits, trying to reaffirm their sense of purpose and understanding of their holier nature by prayer, metaphoric catharsis and meditation. Regardless, when what is broken is made whole again, the Theurge has triumphed.

### *The Medium*

"It is also the duty of the Theurge to speak for those that have no voice of their own. This includes the minor spirits who cannot speak with Garou not versed in the spirits' tongue, the great Incarnae and totems who do not trivialize themselves by directly manifesting to address their desires, and the dead heroes of Garou ancestry, whose spirits often seek out Theurges to make their wishes known. The Theurge is a classical necromancer, communing with the spirit of both the dead and the never-born to gain secrets, but she must also act as the representative of those beings' wishes. This can often put a Theurge in political hot water at a sept, or just make her resented. Many Garou are busy enough with their own lives without having to worry about having to tend to the whims of their ancestors, but it is the Crescent Moon's responsibility to ensure that the dead always receive their due.

"This can be metaphorical as well as literal. If a Theurge's mystic intuition suggests that a dead hero wants to convey some kind of message to the



sept, that dictum should be taken seriously from a Theurge's lips, even if the Theurge has never actually seen the hero's ancestor-spirit. A Theurge has the authority to speak on behalf of spiritual powers, to act as their proxy within Garou society. Now, this might seem like a easily abused privilege, and in truth it is — many Theurges have learned to preface their own desires with "the spirits demand that..." But the cardinal rule of spirit dealings is that you reap what you sow. If the actual spirit whose cause a crooked Theurge appropriated ever shows up, the scam falls in on itself and the Theurge can face Renown loss or far, far worse punishments. Even in the more abstract, spiritual dishonesty offends the spirit broods, and no Theurge can last for long when the unseen world has turned against her.

### *The Oathbreaker*

"Just as a Theurge is the Voice of the Spirits, so she is also the Arm of the Spirits, ensuring that all debts to the ethereal world are repaid in full. Chiminage is treated with tremendous solemnity by Theurges, and many consider their debts to spirits to be of equal priority to their responsibilities to the pack. I'm not sure if I'd go that far, but then I'm a Philodox, not a Theurge, for a reason. I will say that any Theurge that can't find a way to balance both obligations isn't worthy of the title. This can be more difficult than it sounds, however. The spirits are the source of all a Theurge's power, mystique and information. Serving her pack, she's often called on to strike mystically against an enemy or learn her secrets, to bind fetishes or secure military support for a raid from war spirits. This all entails entering into debts of chiminage, and a careless or naïve Theurge can rapidly find herself bound into a web of spirit geasa that will be with her for all her life. It seems easy to swear an oath to never dress in red at the time, especially if it means a mighty bull-spirit will fight to the death at your side. But that promise lasts unto death, and you may have heard the legend of Cu Chulainn's downfall. It's a continual balancing act for a Theurge, trying to get as much power as possible without making a promise she can't keep."

"Theurges aren't just responsible for their own chiminage, though; they enforce spirit pacts throughout the entire Garou Nation. Tragically, Garou of other auspices are sometimes willing to deceive, shortchange or violate a spirit to further their own desires, or even out of the best intentions of helping Gaia overall. Some Theurges can sense these metaphysical betrayers, while others find themselves contacted by the wronged spirit. Regardless, it often falls into a Theurge's lap to ensure that the spirit is repaid. This can mean making politically foolish decisions, or even having to face members of the more combative auspices in a fighting challenge to defend the spirits' dignity. Theurges do all this and more; there are even legends of lone Theurges taking on entire septs guilty of mistreating spirits, usually with words but occasionally with actions as well. It's not often a desirable duty, to enforce respect for beings that it can be so profitable to exploit."

### *The Ritualist*

"I'm sure you've seen more than your fair share of rituals being performed, being Uktena Kin."

Anjou nodded.

"And?"

"And I think that they're frightening, honestly, and while I've seen the real power they have, I still think there's a lot of superstition in them."

"You're right in that not everything you see in a rite is strictly necessary to its supernatural function. But it's not only superstition; it's community. Garou are primal beings; we're predatory in ways that are beyond any human passion. Because of this, I must admit, I've always found human religious sermons and sacraments to be... milquetoast, for lack of a better term."

Anjou chuckled. "You're not alone."

"My point is that Theurges use rituals much like human ministers use a sermon: to reaffirm the community, bonding it together. If it seems dark and terrifying, that is because we as a race are dark and terrifying, and that tone resonates with us. Though, I will admit, I have not known other tribes' rites to be as intentionally macabre as those of the Uktena. Anyway, ritualism does a lot to bond the Garou and to keep unity and hope alive in desperate times. Every rite connects us to something bigger than ourselves. I know this all too well — Philodox are almost as involved in ritual as Theurges are. At the risk of being cliché, you might compare our rites to those silly team-building retreats up-and-cominguppies get sent on by their CEOs, but without the embarrassment factor."

Anjou laughed in spite of herself, and Aaron smiled back at her before continuing. "But of course, the social aspect is just one side of Garou ritual; there's a lot of real power there as well. And that leads me to another role into which we cast our Theurges..."

### *The Magician*

"Iwon't deny that Theurges do some dark things at times, Anjou. These aren't neo-pagans or tree-huggers we're talking about here; Crescent Moons have real, tangible power and they aren't afraid to use it. In addition to all their spiritual and social duties, Theurges fulfill very important temporal roles in the Garou Nation. They create fetishes, divine intelligence about enemy formations, curse our enemies, brew poisons, bind spirits to practical defense pacts and turn the elements against the enemy. This may not be as immediately apparent to you based on where you live — all Uktena have a few charms and spells to call their own — but we are the exception, not the rule. In a Get of Fenris caern, the warriors are warriors, the bards are bards, and any serious kind of mojo will be coming from the Theurges' corner."

"The magic of a Theurge is obviously not flashy Hollywood sorcery. Theurges tend to scorn the obviously supernatural in favor of arts of influence and happenstance, and are typically proficient in a range of curses, abjurations against harm and revealing magics. Now, all Garou have

their own set of Gifts, but while most werewolves find a small handful of tricks that are directly practical to them personally and leave it at that, Theurges tend to study spirit powers much more deeply. Many Theurges track down any rumors of a new Gift vigorously, and devote a great deal of time to expanding their repertoire — it's part of their duty, after all. Theurges are also more likely to gain Gifts outside the normal purview of their breed, tribe and auspice — it's a lot more likely you'll see a Theurge with a Galliard Gift than vice versa. In fact, Theurges have been known to offend members of other tribes by tricking spirits into parting with their tribal secrets.

"But no Garou truly has a plethora of Gifts; what makes Theurges frightening and powerful is that no one can predict exactly what powers a given Theurge has up her sleeve. They can know just about any Gift, and no Theurge worthy of the title will share knowledge of what Gifts she knows easily. In some cases, even a Theurge's packmates aren't aware of the mystical ace up her sleeve until they need to be. All this said, much of a Theurge's so-called magic is not anything she actually does herself, but a favor she receives from a spirit, repaid through the constant webs of Chiminage that wrap around a Theurge's life. This means that a Theurge who knows a diverse body of spirits can do damned near anything in a time of need, at the price of binding her life in an intricate web of obligations, geasa and spirit-debts forever after. Nothing is free, after all."

### *The Intelligence Officer*

"I've touched on the role a Theurge has as an information source a few times now. A pack normally looks to their Theurge to uncover any information they might need in a coming conflict. This is usually gleaned through mystical means — scrying and spirit lore — but it can also be learned more mundanely. Theurges are expected to know secrets, and in many circles the measure of a Theurge's power is determined by how much dirt she has on powerful people. Blackmail is a common practice among them, and a means of gaining the influence and voice they need to perform their more benevolent spiritual duties. Don't look shocked, Anjou — you know how harsh our war is, and how hard it can be to wring anything resembling justice or compassion out of human society. Theurges just use the tools they have available to them. That said, Theurges are not spies, per se — that role belongs to the Ragabash. The closest parallel would be to call them intelligence analysts, but their sources are usually spirits rather than agents in the field. While Ragabash tend to enjoy being sneaky, Theurges love information for it's



own sake, and the darker the secret, the happier a stereotypical Theurge will be.

"If you suspect that Shadows was violating your privacy, Anjou... I hate to say this, but you're probably right. Many Theurges are incredible snoops; adding an Uktenea heritage to the mix just doubles the allure of finding out a juicy new secret. Theurges watch over everyone, often in mystical ways normal Garou have no way of detecting. Yes, it's invasive, and yes, it feeds resentment, but just like the Ragabash and their pranks, it's part of their appointed role by Gaia, so nobody can really do much about it. For what it's worth, they generally don't watch over Kinfolk, because Kinfolk aren't privy to secrets they want to learn. And if a Theurge becomes really obnoxious about their secrets — trying to blackmail a sept elder, for example — a Philodox or other Garou authority can step in a slap them back into line. Or, if the offense warrants, throat them where they stand."

Ending on that note left an awkward silence.

### *The Mystic*

"I'm going to guess that you probably don't have a very high opinion of mysticism."

Anjou nodded, but there was no hostility when she spoke. "When I was young, my mother had this brightly colored Time-Life book about religions around the world. I remember the pictures of the Sufi monks, going out into the desert in Saudi Arabia to chant and howl until they drove themselves into a trance state... or died. I remember thinking how courageous they must have been, to risk their lives in the hopes of receiving a vision. Then I grew up a little, and I came to see their actions as stupid and superstitious rather than noble. For all the talk on television about the mystical experience, I've never seen anything that shows real, concrete good coming from it to offset all the sacrifices people make in its name."

Aaron nodded slowly. "Those monks are as good an image of the Theurge as any. It's a matter of opinion, I guess, but I've never thought of those kinds of people as stupid.

"Look, Anjou. There are mystical questions that we absolutely must have the answers to. Garou spirituality is not something done just to give us comfort when times are hard — indeed, our faith only tells us that our goddess is dying, and the world is prophesied to die with Her. Instead, spiritualism is just a part of the world to us, something we are duty-bound to address, and the spirit worlds are every bit as sick as the corporeal. Reason and science, as helpful as they have been in many areas, cannot save us here — the Wyrm, Gaia, purity and corruption; these things are simply beyond their domain. We need our mysticism, now more than ever, if we are to have hope. Our mystics are the one-eyed men in a world of the blind; they are the only ones who can offer us guidance in the realms of the higher mysteries."

Anjou shrugged, and Aaron wished he were a Galliard, so that his words could so beautifully articulate what he knew in his heart. But he wasn't, and so there was a human woman, deeply hurt by the spiritual, staring at him as if he were an idiot.

### *The Visionary*

"Do you believe in the Wyrm, Anjou?"

She paused and thought. "Yes, I guess. I've seen the Ahroun dragged back from battles covered with blood and ichor. I've heard the stories, listened to descriptions of Black Spiral Dancers and Nexus Crawlers. Your enemies are certainly real. And I've seen the real supernatural power your Gifts have — to heal, to create darkness, to jam up guns and computers or turn yourselves invisible. You're not fighting an imaginary war, so it makes sense that the spiritual force your enemies revere is a real one as well. And yes, if you want to know, in truth it terrifies me."

"What exactly do you think the Wyrm is, Anjou?"

"I, I don't know. It's the enemy, the evil you fight. I don't know a lot about it. I guess it's kind of like the Devil, right?"

"In Christianity, I've heard, the Devil is just an angel out of line, a rebellious spirit who doesn't respect his creator. I guess that's a reasonable image of the Wyrm. To the Christians, though, the Devil doesn't matter that much in the grand scheme of things. Michael could come one day and smite Lucifer really good, and it just wouldn't make a great amount of difference. The world would go on just fine after Old Scratch passes on, Heaven will still open its gates to the true believers, and God's natural order will still reign on Earth. Good triumphs over evil, just as Saint John told us it would. But the Wyrm isn't that simple."

"The Wyrm is here to stay, Anjou. It's not just a rebel angel or rogue spirit, it's one of three cornerstones of the universe. I very much doubt even a godlike being like Luna — or Gabriel, if you prefer — could ever kill it. It would be like trying to kill gravity, or exterminate love. And the Wyrm is absolutely necessary — without it, the world cannot exist in anything resembling the form we know, and all life would surely cease."

"That's why the Theurges' role as a visionary is so terribly important to the Garou's fight. Somebody has to take the long view; somebody has to seriously consider what we are going to do about the Wyrm in the end. Now, any group of people under siege is inherently going to be thinking for the moment, trying to survive the next day, week or month. But in the end that's destructive, because it means we keep sliding backwards, losing ground, without having a long-term stratagem to solve our problems. Right now, the Garou Nation has absolutely got its hands full, so the Theurges are the only ones thinking long — trying to figure out how we can actually heal the world, restore balance to the Triat, rather than just fighting a war of containment to prevent the Wyrm from doing worse than it already has."

"That's a cause worth pursuing, and if you think about it a bit, you'll see that mysticism and spirit-questing, searching out supernatural revelations, is the only approach that has any chance of doing any good. Unless you can think of anything better the Theurges should be doing to heal the corruption that they aren't already. Trust me, I'm all ears..."

Anjou couldn't.

## The Long View

"So what is this visionary plan, then? What's the catechism here? How are your peoples' mystics going to put a broken world back together again?"

"There's a lot of discussion on just that topic, but no real consensus, unfortunately. Theurges are a very diverse lot, and every tribe's shamans have a different outlook. Even within a tribe, different Theurges feel that different things are needed. Garou spiritualism is very different from human religion; we aren't nearly as bound by dogma or catechism because of our distrust for the Weaver. This is a great strength, but it's also a grave weakness — in terms of spiritual exploration, everybody tends to do their own thing, and since we're in a situation where we need some answers P.D.Q., that could be bad."

"I know a circle of Get Theurges down in Arizona who believe that the Defiler Wyrm would be weakened, and the lost Balance aspect reborn, if humanity could only be taught to accept death as natural rather than fearing it. In Alaska there are Wendigo Theurges who want to try and draw humanity away from the cities, hoping that they'll learn to respect Gaia again if they have to depend upon nature for daily survival again — and no, this isn't subjugation; many humans *want* to live closer to the natural world. Other Theurges see restoring balance in terms of nurturing the *virtue du jour*, be it honesty, righteous anger, spiritual piety, filial love or common courtesy. The Stargazers, inspired by Buddhism, find moderation in all things the key to resisting the Wyrm's influence, and strive to teach humanity temperance in this vein. Other views are more supernatural — a cabal of Strider Theurges in Uganda collects tales of Umbral journeys, collating and analyzing them in the hopes of finding a common thread in Umbral victories against the Wyrm. A pack of Walkers in Seattle is dedicated to psychoanalyzing captured Black Spiral Dancers, in the hopes that curing their madness might in effect contribute to curing the Wyrm overall. A bunch of Bone Gnawer students founded a society dedicated to debunking urban legends, taking the psychological bite out of the mythical terrors that menace the impoverished side of humanity. And of course our own Bane Tenders strive to keep sleeping evils asleep with blessed songs and other soothing powers, and to undermine active Banes by soothing their inflamed emotions, driving them into Slumber.

"The thing is, you see, that I think all of this helps. The world has some really big problems as it stands, and there is not going to be one epic heroic solution to the dilemma of the Wyrm. But a whole bunch of little efforts does not necessarily add up to nothing; in the end I think that every spiritual approach can do at least some good against the Wyrm, and the diverse ways of the Theurges are the best chance we have. Really, it's not just Theurges, either, though of course they have a much clearer vision of the enemy. Humans fight the Wyrm constantly, though they don't know it; they oppose corruption by promoting social

justice, by refusing to give in to base urges, by having the strength to care about something. Spiritual warfare has a thousand faces, and the more metaphorical weapons the Theurges can find, the better off everybody is.

## Theurges across the Tribes

"Living by an Uktena sept, Anjou, you only see a fraction of the overall culture of the Garou. Every tribe has its own perspective on spirituality and its own rituals."

"The Black Furies' Theurges consider themselves to be servitors of the Wyld as much as Gaia, though they consider the two to be tightly linked. Their theology ties strongly to gender, of course — they believe that women have a strong natural bond with the Wyld because both share in the ability to create life. Sometimes this is used as an excuse for arguments of female superiority, and many Fury Theurges argue that males are unclean, justifying the strict gender segregation under which most Fury rites occur. But there is a greater depth to them than just xenophobia — the Furies want to protect the things that are uniquely feminine, and unlike most human feminists they do believe in and support gender roles. Nor, contrary to what you've probably heard, do they sacrifice men or even work against them — most believe Gaia created each gender with unique abilities and a unique role. Their focus is on women, and they want to ensure that men revere, and yes, even fear, the feminine power. At least, that's the story I got from a Fury shaman I once talked to."

Anjou nodded. "Women are excluded from so many things, big and small. Men often don't see that, but every woman is aware of it. I think it must mean a great deal to these women to have their secret rites and sacred role, the honors and duties that are uniquely female in which men cannot share. I can't say if that's fair or not, but I can understand how it grants them dignity they would not otherwise have."

Aaron nodded. He was glad that Anjou was warming up to the ideas he was describing in spite of herself. Perhaps there could be an equitable resolution to this yet. Eager to keep her interest, he continued. "The Bone Gnawers are not often thought of as spiritual, but their Theurges have a strong niche nonetheless. Laughter heals the soul, and they use self-deprecation to grant dignity to those who would otherwise have none. Their rituals often parody those of the other tribes — they even have a special rite for Super Bowl Sunday — but they are still powerful tools for creating reverence, community, warmth and compassion. The Gnawers disdain formality, but in irreverence they paradoxically show great respect for their tribe's traditions and pay chimirage to spirits that have little else to their name. In the hearts of large cities, Anjou, there lurk powerful and unknown spirits driven by the passions of the downtrodden and the feral. These beings are rarely seen or heard from in their homes, because the city Gauntlet is so strong, but the Bone Gnawers give them a voice, and in doing so they make the cities into living things instead of sterile collectives. These Theurges teach humanity to respect the physical

things of their everyday life, the buildings and the trash heaps — they take the heart and soul of animism and bring it into the modern age, and we owe them much for that.

"I have only once had the opportunity to look upon some of the great and secret urban spirits that Gnawer Theurges pay homage to — the Heap Totems, the Hidden Sewer Crawlers, the Megalith Spirit of the Montreal Central Station. I wish that I could take you into the Umbra to see them yourself, because they are majestic and terrible, and yet any attempt I might make to describe them would only draw them as laughable. But I do not have that ability, sadly."

"The Children of Gaia's Theurges embrace the ideal of spiritual healing whole-heartedly, seeking out ways to cleanse corruption from individuals and heal emotional wounds. They have connections through their totem to special spirits called Heart Guides that have insight into the emotions and potentials of an individual. Every person has a Heart Guide, and that spirit understands the path that person can find to rise up over suffering, loss and depression. It's the Gaian Theurge's responsibility to use that information to help the person in question. Now if that sounds cliched or saccharine to you, I want you to consider this:

"I'm sure you've seen real cruelty and degradation in your life, Anjou — I know that I have. And I know that, like me, you have probably put up your emotional walls and prevented yourself from sharing the pain of others completely, because that kind of empathy would be too hard for you to bear. We all do it, consciously or not, and I'm not trying to condemn that. But I am trying to get across to you the incredible courage that it takes to do what these Theurges do, to live though others' pain with them and to share their wounding. It's messy and bloody and it *hurts*, and very few people are psychologically set up to give of themselves in this manner. Surely, you've seen people like that? At homeless shelters, at rape crisis centers, at police stations and even schools? And you feel just a little bit in awe of them, and very awkward, because you know that it's not in your nature to give as selflessly and completely as they do, again and again. That's what the Children of Gaia's Theurges are like. Think about that before you dismiss all Theurges as bullies, tree-huggers or dogmatics."

Anjou glanced downward and did not say anything in response to Aaron's challenge, so after a moment he continued speaking.

"If the Gaian Theurges are gifted with great compassion, then those of the Fianna are blessed with joy. So many of my companions refuse to see the spiritual depth of the Fianna, just because their skin is white. Forgetting for a second that tribe's crimes against the Pure Lands, ask them how they tended their own: Fianna have always had strong ties to the land, and you can bet any one of their Theurges knows about everything that grows naturally within several miles of their home. Like us, they've watched a tribe that was once close to them fall into the maw of spiritual corruption; unlike us, their brothers didn't even earn a heroic death. Because of this, Fianna Theurges tend to be very serious about rooting out spiritual and psychological corruption in

the Nation; this fact hardly makes the many Fianna Theurges "investigators" and "specialists" popular with foreign septs. But in the end, nobody wants to see another great tragedy like the White Howlers happen, so we're glad to have them.

"Now, living at an Uktena sept, you've probably heard a lot about Fianna irresponsibility and crimes of passion. Fianna have the souls of artists and singers, and their Theurges try to use that to bring the message of reverence to humanity. They also get mocked for that, because so often what comes out of the process is Hollywood drivel, pseudo-Celtic pap and shallow stereotypes. But at least they are trying to reawaken the primal spiritualities; Fianna Theurges have put a lot of weight behind the Celtic revival, modern Druidism and even Wicca, and for every ten vapid tree-huggers and crystal-wavers they shovel on us, we get one real spiritualist whose heart and soul is really in sync with Gaia's brood. And maybe that's worth it.

"If you want to talk about primal, though, let's address the Get of Fenris. Now, most of their Theurges' rites are horrifying to many outsiders, involving pain, blood and sometimes even death. At the same time, though, nothing that they do is gratuitous. Fenris, they say, bit off Tyr's hand for a reason. If Tyr had not lost his hand binding rage beneath justice, how could the act have any meaning? How long could a binding last, which is not sealed with agony and loss? I suspect many Bane Tenders would understand that. The Fenrir spirituality is one of strength and ordeal, and a Theurge serving Fenris will journey to the ends of the Earth to repay a debt of chimirage. 'That which does not kill me can only make me stronger,' they say, and for the Get at least that may well be the truth. But they have nothing but contempt for anyone that could not endure their rites, and that tends to alienate them from other Theurges.

"Glass Walker Theurges are viewed with a degree of prejudice by any other Crescent Moon born more than twenty years ago. Which is a damned shame really, because they are among both the most necessary and most innovative of the Garou Nation's spiritualists. It's a very simple conceit to fall into: respect all the spirits except the ones that don't fit neatly into my worldview. I've been in big cities, and while I can't say they're my favored stomping grounds, I'm not so blind as to miss that there's real blood, anguish, joy, fury, passion and raw elemental power hiding beneath the steel and plastic. A Theurge can sense that kind of thing, you know, and the Glass Walkers have decided to explore it in greater detail.

"Now that's not to say that many city-spirits aren't sick and broken things — that's just an objective fact, and give the Walkers some credit: they know it. But Theurges are healers, and the Walker Theurges have taken it upon themselves to restore a semblance of dignity and reverence to the cities, teaching mankind to respect the souls of the buildings they erect and the lots they pave. And if urban dwellers really did respect the world around them, I think cities would end up as a lot nicer places than they are right now. Now, many young Walker Crescents see themselves as on a one-man mission to

bring the Weaver back to sanity, and while their goal is admirable I'm not sure they appreciate the depth of the problem. But the tribe all together? Let us just say that I haven't given up hope for Mother Spider just yet.

"Red Talon spirituality is very, very hard for even homid-born Garou to understand; fortunately, Anjou, nobody really expects Kin to even try. We Garou are expected to honor the Talons as any other tribe, but I hardly blame you for your horror when they are mentioned, knowing what you do about them. To your species, they are a dangerous enemy, and that is tragic. What can I say of their Theurges? Begin here: imagine a sentient, thinking mind with no concept of logic, no reason or rationality. In many ways, they are very much like humanity was, before the rise of Sumeria and Egypt — they neither seek nor want explanations for the world; they just revere it. There is no line between the mystical and the mundane to a Red Talon Theurge, because the difference is imperceptible to them. There is only nature, which both provides life and takes it away, and the massive, alien un-nature crafted by the Apes. There is nothing "super-natural" to a Talon about rites or Gnosis, but a city is the most starkly supernatural — literally, "outside of nature" — thing they will ever witness. It is beyond the natural order, beyond Gaia's laws — at least, in their eyes.

The rites and services of the Talons occur in the depths of primeval wilderness. Many other Garou have never seen a Talon Theurge — it's their scouts and warriors that are infamous for attacking human settlements, and Galliards and Philodox who most often negotiate with other Garou septs. Because they lack the distinction between mystical and mundane, they don't think of themselves as shamans or magicians. Instead, they see themselves as the restorers of nature's inherent balances and the tenders of wounds. I've heard that Talon Theurges are granted the task of raising and teaching the young — both Garou and Kin — but that could be hearsay or speculation on the part of my sources.

"Shadow Lord Theurges... not all Crescent Moons are good beings, and in truth the Lords' shamans live up to many of the accusations you have laid against the auspice as a whole. Many of them are proficient in using spirits and magic to spy, to curse, to blight and envenom. They are plotters all, and coming from an Uktenea that's saying something. The Lords rule by strength, and as most Theurges lack physical might, they have to find another source of authority if they are to survive within the continual, ruthless Darwinian selection the tribe practices. Their power, like that of a traditional Hoodoo Man, is fear: they make it well known that they see and know things others do not, and then they build on that mystery by trying to make the unseen powers they converse with seem as horrific and macabre as possible. They are masters of psychological warfare and occult terrorism, and it becomes all the more frightening for one of their victims to wake up thinly coated with blood that is not their own, because said victim knows that their mystic power is real and the Lord could have done far, far worse.

"The Lords' Theurges do respect the spirits, but they are far more willing to bind and dominate them than other

Garou, who deal more diplomatically. Of course, in Grandfather Thunder's brood most spirits would consider a Theurge to be worthy of service if and only if they could force it from the spirit in question, so it's just the way things are done over there. Lord Theurges are also often cult leaders in the mortal world, using their skill with high ritual to cow humans interested in occult power into their service.

"Silent Strider Theurges understand better than anyone the sacredness of place, being travelers. Location is a magic all its own, and one's home is one's temple — no one knows this better than the Striders, who have had their homeland stolen by serpentine vampires. They are often able to tell a lot about the character of a locale by its physical presence, and many Strider Theurges are extremely well versed in history and heritage. To these beings, respecting the past goes hand in hand with respecting the spirits, though that does not make them traditionalists — there's a difference between respecting what came before and trying to force the present to match up to the past.

All Theurges can speak with the ancestor-spirits of other Garou — being half-spirit ourselves, we go to the Middle World when we die. But the Theurges of the Striders have ties to the Underworld, the home of the souls of dead humans, and they are able to speak with the ghosts and shades that dwell therein. Many Strider Theurges devote themselves to the dead, helping them to resolve the things that keep them tied to the Gaia Realm. This most often isn't just a matter of avenging a death or delivering a last message to a loved one; the passions of a ghost are as deep and nuanced as those of a living person, and they must be resolved before that restless spirit can move on. It's a kind of spiritual healing, which of course makes it central to the Theurges' duties. I've heard rumors that great tragedy has recently struck the humans' afterlife-world, and the Strider Theurges now seek simply to help ghosts survive where they can — but that is just hearsay, little more.

"Silver Fang Theurges continue in the grand European tradition of applying reason to faith, and using philosophical study to uncover higher spiritual truths; I'm sure Thomas Aquinas would be quite proud. Unsurprisingly, they do tend to be overly concerned with orthodoxy, but I think this comes more from a sincere desire to believe in what is true, rather than dogmatic thought. Their clarity of theology lends them a great deal of credence when dealing with humans, who are used to alternative or pagan religions having a muddy, vague or new-agey (in the shallow sense) theology. These Silver Fangs are, to some extent, succeeding in articulating animism, and that's no small feat. Yet, even amidst their detached intellectualism and regal halls, there is another side to the Silver Fangs' shamans. Mystery cults, ecstatic revelers, masters of divination and prophetic oracles are not uncommon in the tribe, and form their own cults and factions, often being allied with the Druidic groups Fianna support. They aren't so much opposed to the mainstream intellectualism of Silver Fang Theurges as they are a counterbalance to it; many Theurges belong in one camp by

day and the other by night. By this means the Fangs pay equal homage to both the intellectual and passionate elements of spirituality.

"Given the character of the tribe, it's not surprising how heavily honor figures into Silver Fang shamanism. They are among the most devoted to maintaining — and enforcing — debts of chimirage in the Garou Nation. Sadly, they have trouble appreciating any kind of humor concerning spirits, and this can drive them into conflict with the Ragabash. Fortunately, as in all things, they strive to lead by example, and a Silver Fang presence can often bring a lapsed sept new regard for the spirits, simply by the nobility and eloquence of the Theurge who speaks in their name.

"Stargazer Theurges mix Garou mythology with Buddhist philosophy to arrive at a belief system they call the Gaiadharma, the cycle of life. Many of these are isolated mystics, living the stereotypical mountaintop lifestyle and isolating themselves from impure influences to improve their clarity of thought. But many others are out and about among mankind and Garou; I think the best way to describe their mission would be to say that they see themselves as the warders of excess. They work to teach humanity and Garou alike to avoid swinging to extremes in their choices and to embrace the middle path of moderation and temperance.

"I suspect that they had a hand in their tribe's recent decision to separate from the Garou Nation. I can see that a vision of some type guided them, and I hope the choice that they reached was the correct one. Still, the Nation is less without these Theurges. They are in large part the individuals responsible for convincing the Garou Nation to see the Weaver as a threat as significant as the Wyrm, and giving us a clue as to how to act against it. Their view of what exactly the Weaver is, is also fairly visionary — rather than focusing on the traditionally emphasized aspects of technology and modernism, they dig to the core and view Mother Spider fundamentally as a weaver of illusions to cloud and conceal spiritual vision. I don't claim to understand all their philosophies, but some of their work certainly makes fascinating reading.

"Part of the reason I'm telling you all this, Anjou, is so that you don't view all Theurges as being like those of the Uktena. We have Theurges making most of the important decisions in our tribe, and I'm not going to argue with you if you want to tell me that may not be an utterly good thing. The truth is that as much as the Uktena uncover many powerful secrets and sacred truths, we also suffer from the maladies of Theurge leadership: overdeveloped caution, a tendency to inaction and an unhealthy attraction to dark mystical power. As a Philodox, I must admit that I see a lot of hope for many of the proud young Ahroun and Galliards pushing themselves to positions of leadership among us. Spirituality is good, but it isn't the be-all and end-all of everything, and these new, dynamic perspectives are helping our tribe to realize that. So yes, if you want to know, some of your anger at the Theurges you've met probably has a

righteous base, and many of them may have grown complacent. I'm not going to deny any of that."

Anjou nodded slowly. "Thank you for granting that. I'm not opposed to Theurges in general, I guess. It's just that some of the ones around here seem so damned arrogant...."

Aaron nodded slowly. "On, then, to the Wendigo. Here you will find almost the opposite — the warriors rule. Wendigo Theurges tend to be vengeful beings, using fear to their advantage much like the Shadow Lords do. Many view efforts to teach humanity as misguided, believing that history has shown that humans are too ignorant to be taught. Of course, when they speak of humans, they often mean "white men." For all that the Wendigo are frightening, Anjou, they are on our side against a world that is still herding and abusing us; they are our Little Brothers, and we can't forget that.

"I'm sure you've heard the boasts that Wendigo visiting the sept sometimes make about being pure-blooded Natives of august ancestry, and if you've taken a few anthropology and American history courses, you know how ludicrous most of those claims are likely to be. The tribal elders have the same attitude toward spirituality they do toward lineage — "keep it pure" — and the approach is no more realistic in the field of mysticism than it is in breeding. Many of their Theurges are amateur anthropologists by necessity, trying to keep their rituals and chimirage strictly accurate to the ways the Cherokee or Tsimshian did it three centuries ago. Of course, it is a crippling weakness for a mystic to focus so much on details of form over sincerity of expression, and rituals three centuries old often aren't very applicable to the modern world, outside of very limited situations. In the most rigid septs, there is even a form of spiritual apartheid enforced — Theurges aren't permitted to commune with spirits that don't have precedent in pre-Columbian Native or Wendigo legends.

"Obviously, this is an intensely stifling environment for true spiritual visionaries to live under, and the Theurges break out of it when they can. I've heard there's something of an underground spiritual movement in the tribe that mixes a distinctly modernist bent with traditional devotion to protecting Native peoples and preserving not just the form but the meaning, the primal essence, of traditional Native religions. For what it's worth, I give these courageous spiritualists all my blessings."

### *Other Moons*

"You have to understand this thing, Anjou: auspices are not like feuding nations or petty high school cliques. We all depend on each other, and we deal with the other auspices every day of our lives. Theurges have many things they can do to help members of other auspices, and similarly they have many needs they depend upon the other Garou to fulfill. Some of these exchanges are purely professional, but others are very, very personal, tying in to the roots of what makes each auspice what it is. It's the pack mentality, and that's not something I can easily explain to a human. It's like family, but more so — love or hate your packmates, you trust them implicitly. You perform the function you are good at — your

auspice — and you depend on them to do the same, enabling the pack to work very effectively together. It's beautiful, in a way, and I hope I don't sound patronizing if I say that it's probably a little outside your experience. Anyway...

"Ragabash are not dissimilar to Theurges in many ways, and the two auspices value each other more than you would initially expect. Ragabash often end up acting as muses to Theurges — their questioning of the ways has sparked many Theurges' more extended spiritual explorations. Theurges that propose truly radical or visionary ideas often find that the Ragabash offer them the only support to be found within the Garou Nation, and for this they are thankful. Also, most Theurges have a greater understanding of the spiritual importance of the trickster archetype than many other Garou, which means they'll tolerate more good-natured ribbing from a Ragabash then, say, an Ahroun might. Of course, if a Theurge feels that a Ragabash is mocking the spirits instead of illuminating them, the whole relationship turns very sour very quickly. Still, Ragabash aren't supposed to be doing that, and very few are, so it's usually not an issue.

"Like any clergy, Theurges often risk becoming lost in the weave of dogma, reciting their holy rituals without passion or genuine sacred inspiration. Ragabash fight against dogma and tunnel vision everywhere in the Garou nation — they aren't trying to destroy tradition, just ensure that it retains its meaning and stays flexible — and the Theurges are their targets as often as not. There's a good deal of diversity in how Theurges respond to having their theology challenged by a Ragabash, ranging from hide-bound fear and outrage to calm acceptance and reasoned debate. As much as they'd never admit it, though, Theurges envy Ragabash: just about every Theurge with a significant amount of experience behind her has had to make a hurtful sacrifice to fulfill a promise at some point or another. The casual glee with which the Ragabash brush aside responsibilities, break their sworn vows and baldly dissemble through shit-eating grins seems inherently decadent to those Garou who were appointed by Gaia to ensure that promises made to spirits are always kept. It's their sacred role, yes, but still it irks....

"Theurges obviously have a tremendously diverse range of responsibilities and they often turn to a Philodox packmate like myself to help bring order to their chaotic lives. I guess it's just my auspice's role to be pillars that other Garou lean on, and Theurges do end up relying on us for stability, for support and the occasional reality check, more than you'd expect. It's good to have someone who can drive your kids to school while you're out on a vision quest, and most Philodox are willing to do that kind of thing for a Theurge packmate. A solid friendship with a Philodox is a good way for a Theurge to keep one foot firmly grounded in temporal concerns, thereby avoiding drifting off into the ivory-tower world of ideals and mysticism entirely. I guess you could say we anchor them, and they do seem thankful for that.

"We're also their fellow ritualists in the Garou Nation. In theory, we have very different spheres of influence than they do — we focus on rituals that confer respect, judge

Renown, separate truth from lies and reinforce duties, while they go in more for the rites that have real mystical power or esoteric symbolic significance. Nonetheless, we're both ritualists, and most Philodox value having a Theurge friend whose brain they can pick for help organizing a ceremony and ensuring that it has the right kind of emotional impact. Rituals are rituals, after all, and their practice gives Theurges and Philodox a lot of common ground.

"Galliards also have a lot in common with Theurges. Both auspices have duties that enmesh them in the human world, and so both often end up trying to lead something resembling a human life on top of their Garou one. Many Theurges have agendas for spiritual restoration that involve changes to human society, legality or attitudes, but the shaman is a terrifying and sometimes antisocial figure; they lack the social finesse at which Galliards excel. Thus, Theurges and Galliards often end up working together supporting social activism, environmental protest movements, various civil rights causes and alternative religious events. It might be fair to say that the Theurges divine what must be done, providing the heart and soul of such endeavors, while Galliards know how to do it, being masters of everything from fast-talk to sincere inspiration. Theurges thus depend on Galliards to articulate and present their ideas in a way that captures people's imaginations.

"Sadly, in Garou society the relationship between these auspices is not always as harmonious. Galliards keep the Garou Nation's stories and legends, and like any playwrights they sometimes face attempts at censorship from the local religious authorities. Galliard tales most often focus on (and romanticize) the power and competence of a lone Garou hero, and sometimes the Theurges feel that their heroic fantasies don't sufficiently show that everything the hero has is ultimately a gift from the spirits. I'm sure that Theurges would prefer that every legend be phrased as a testament to piety and a baroque morality play, while the passionate Galliards enjoy stories of adventure and heroism. Storycraft is the Galliard's domain, and when Ranks are equal the Galliard carries absolute authority in that area. But young Galliards can often find themselves frustrated by elder Theurges acting as censors. Fortunately, most Galliards — like all Garou — really do revere the spirits deeply, even if they haven't made a career out of it. So a few minor suggestions and changes to ensure that a story is reverent as well as accurate and entertaining are often welcomed.

"Ahroun have very little in common with Theurges; they're almost perfect counterpoints to each other. Crescent Moons are introspective, nurturing, visionary, idealistic and as peaceful as any Garou ever gets; Full Moons are harsh, direct, practical, concerned with immediate, tangible things and of course, very angry and violent. This doesn't mean there's great conflict, just that their spheres of influence rarely overlap to a real extent. Ahroun highly value levelheaded and reasonable Theurges as tactical assets; any warrior knows the value of field specialists. Conversely, Theurges are often the least combative of Garou, and so they depend on Ahroun

for protection in battle. Not to say that Theurges can't aid a battle; their aid can be invaluable, but it most often depends on them being kept away from the front line carnage to direct spirit allies and toss curses at the enemy. Overall, the two auspices have a healthy professional respect for each other's work, but no strong personal ties; friendships (or rivalries) between Ahroun and Theurges tend to develop based on factors other than the duties and nature of the auspices involved.

### *Theurges and Gender*

"Some Garou, particularly Furies, have theorized that there might be significantly more female Theurges all told than males. This ties into their peculiar gender theory — masculine aggression tempered and guided by feminine introspection. It would be interesting to see some statistics on this, but of course Garou society isn't set up in a way that allows the collection of such data reliably. I will say that in my life experience, I've seen a large number of male Theurges, and they do their jobs damned well — just like the female Ahroun. Perhaps it's not so much about male and female as masculine and feminine. The Theurge is certainly a nurturing archetype, something regarded by traditional societies as a feminine role, and even though nowadays we know men are as capable of being good nurturers as women, the mystical correspondence between any Theurge, male or female, and the feminine aspect remains, to some extent.

"Theurges also sometimes intentionally confuse gender roles in order to attain mystical power. Surely you've heard of Contraries — the tricksters and shamans who dress as the opposite gender and live out exaggerated forms of their society's gender roles? Ragabash are the most infamous Garou to take this role, but Theurges do so too, on occasion, for psychological and supernatural reasons. These rare Theurges tend to be outcasts or questioners themselves, following in the footsteps of the Ragabash, but they lend a more disturbing tone to the role of Contrary than a New Moon might. It sets them apart from the rest of society, and it tends to disturb people on an instinctive level. It's easy to laugh at a transvestite, but nobody dares to laugh at a Theurge, so that just leaves the awkwardness and the fear. The common wisdom is that a Theurge is expected to be disturbing on some levels; it helps them fulfill their role of promoting reverence for the spirits. Mystically, the division of gender carries great power. Symbolically, crossing that



line makes the Theurge a magical being, just like crossing the line between life and death during the Rite of Passage.

## *Living as a Theurge*

"Among Garou, Theurges are the most likely to experience a less traumatic First Change. They don't have overwhelming Rage, and they don't instinctively tend to be as bloodthirsty or aggressive as the Galliards or Ahroun. It's an uncommon Theurge that has potent enough Rage to even have a chance of frenzying around the time of her First Change. Further, the Theurge is a being of two worlds even before she is consciously aware of her heritage — Gaian spirits often feel drawn to protect and guide a nascent Theurge before her Change, sending her signs and omens from the earliest days of her life. Many homid Theurges experience their First Change by traveling deeper into the wilderness than they have ever before been, driven to do so by instincts they did not fully understand and messages from beyond the material world. Lupus Theurges find themselves with spiritual questions that separate them from their fellow wolves, and their introspection and inquiry often lead them away from their pack before the First Change occurs.

"If the First Change is easier for Theurges, then the Rite of Passage makes up for it. Many tribes have different practices, but there is a common thread throughout many of them: in becoming a shaman, the initiate must die and return to life. The Get of Fenris literally hang their Theurges from a high oak tree, leaving them to sway in the wind and rain for nine days and nine nights. Now, suffocation will not normally kill a Garou, but the oxygen deprivation will still cause fainting and hallucinations — sacred visions granted by Fenris and nightmares drawn from deepest Niflheim. The Wendigo send their young Theurges out into the wilderness, fasting in solitude until they frenzy from the hunger or are granted a vision by Changing Woman or Sky Boy. Young Glass Walkers sometimes crawl into the shafts and steam tunnels beneath a nightclub or rave, intentionally overdosing on hallucinogenic drugs to try and merge their consciousness with the throng of the dancers, the music of the city. Regardless of the method, the young Theurge brushes against death in order to gain a glimpse of the world of the dead. Even among tribes that do not have these practices, it's too common to be coincidental for a Theurge to end up mortally wounded and comatose after a Rite of Passage — the spirits claim their due, whether through ritual or circumstance.

"This near death is both a symbolic echo of the First Theurge's sacrifice, and a bonding with the spirit worlds. By making the journey into the world beyond this one and returning, the Theurge becomes a magical being, a creature of two worlds and a bridge from one to the other. Now, all Garou are creatures of spirit and flesh, Anjou; we all possess the ability to step sideways. But a Theurge is special in that she is a conduit, being in both worlds at the same time metaphorically if not physically. Spirits recognize this; it makes them more willing to convey sacred mysteries and to offer aid and succor in the Theurge's most desperate hour. For all that they must endure, the blessings of a child of two worlds are great indeed.

"The life of a Theurge is a demanding one, a continual balancing act between the spiritual and the temporal. On one hand, many of their duties — providing spiritual guidance to humanity, protecting sacred animals, creating fetishes, ministering to their pack, healing the sick, fulfilling chimirage — require them to be focused on real, normal life. The Garou Nation has no use for Theurges who are so enraptured with the higher mysteries that they become completely out of touch with the banalities of Garou life. Indeed, such a being can be a terrible liability to a pack! There are times when Garou are preparing for battle, and we need spirit allies bound to fight by our sides, incantations to drive away attacking Banes, and fetish weapons to give to our strongest warriors. If a Theurge is too "spiritual" to provide these things, she is gravely remiss in her duties.

"On the other hand, however, the world of shadows, omens and mysteries exerts a siren's song pull over a Theurge, and if she shuts that out too strongly, she's guilty of refusing to listen to divine revelations — again, a grave sin. You must understand this, Anjou, and I appreciate how outside of your — or my — regular frame of experience it must be: Theurges live deeply in a mystical world, where omens and ineffable enigmas lurk around every corner. Imagine if everything you experienced had two meanings: the literal one, and the symbolic one. A Theurge who loses her grip and immerses herself wholly in the ethereal world sees supernatural causes and effects in everything around her, reading omens and messages where there are none and becoming unable to relate to the concerns of the material world. Mortal psychologists call this disability *Quixotism* — the compulsive ascribing of supernatural causes to mundane events.

"The balancing act is made even more difficult if a homid Theurge is trying to hold down anything resembling a normal human life along with her spiritual and material duties. It's deeply surreal to have to return from a mythic quest in the spirit worlds in time to complete accounting reports for your boss, but some Theurges find themselves in that situation. Yet there is a compelling reason for a Theurge to live as a human does as well: they must, if they are striving to influence and heal the maladies of human society, be a part of it. A healer cannot do her work if she holds herself so far above her patient — or just outside her patient's world — as to lack sympathy for the patient's life. So Theurges do try to hold jobs, parishes, families and other human concerns more frequently than other Garou do, with varying degrees of success. The extent to which mysticism and chimirage plays havoc with that depends on the individual — the cleverest and most quick-witted Crescent Moons treat it like juggling, seeming to have genuine fun keeping all the elements of their complex and chaotic lives in balance. Those with less of this queer, inhuman composure find it a continual, nerve-wracking struggle trying to keep all their hens in a row. Nobody ever said being a Crescent Moon was easy, after all.

"Aging is both hard and rewarding for a Theurge. They tend to have the longest lives of any Garou, but they also have the most limited futures. Unlike Ahroun and Ragabash, they

don't often go out in a blaze of glory. Unlike Galliards, our society does not give them the freedom to become loners, going out to seek one last, great story or legend. The Litany tenet about the old and infirm tends to be liberally interpreted toward Theurges — or more accurately, they are considered to be a liability only when their minds start to go. A warrior must be fit in mind and body, but a shaman need only be able to hear the spirits clearly and remember their secrets. For Theurges, rank tends to be tied to age more than for the other auspices. An ambitious young warrior can gain great skill in his art within a decade or less, but true mastery of spiritualism takes a lifetime. This can be frustrating to the ambitious Crescent Moon — an aged Theurge Elder might have watched two generations of Ahroun pass her by in rank before attaining her title — but patience is a quality that Theurges value anyway, and I'm sure many other Garou envy Theurges' opportunity to take life as it comes rather than rushing through it.

"The Theurge who achieves the status of elder in rank as well as age is a spiritual leader to her people, a treasured resource that all Garou pay reverence to. Elder Theurges often become Masters of the Rite at their sept, but a Theurge can hold a wide variety of sept positions. Regardless of their title, these beings are treated with a reverence for the elderly not typically seen in Garou society. We depend on our elder Theurges, Anjou, in a way that's damn hard to articulate. They are the closest of anyone to what we're all fighting for, and it's hard for any Garou not to feel a kind of awe when dealing with them. Our society reveres wisdom highly, as much so as glory and honor, and an elder Theurge is seen by many as wisdom incarnate. We need them, and when they die their loss is felt throughout the sept."

Aaron trailed off, unsure of what else to say, trying to capture with words something he suspected couldn't be caught.

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Anjou and Aaron talked for the better part of the afternoon, mostly about trivialities. A Philodox understands psychology, after all, but anyone could see that a woman who has lost her children and is being mocked by her peers needs nothing more than simple companionship. The knock — the one Aaron had been quietly hoping would not arrive — happened in the early hours of the evening. He quickly went to answer the door before Anjou could respond.

Aaron had never met Speaks-With-Shadows before, being a visitor to the sept, but she looked every bit as imposing as he had imagined her. He could not estimate her age — possibly older than any human had lived — but her wire-like white hair, bloodshot eyes and leathery skin made her seem every inch a crone out of Greek legend. Which, Aaron supposed, was exactly the image she wanted to evoke.

"May I come in?" she asked with the voice of a woman unaccustomed to asking permission.

"Of course," Anjou quickly replied.

"I thought it best that I knock this time."

Anjou bowed her head in fear. Clearly, Aaron wasn't the only one who had heard about some of the less savory things she had said regarding Speaks-With-Shadows.

The crone's words came quickly and awkwardly; it was clear she did not enjoy speaking them. "I... I heard some of what Aaron was telling you. He is right, you know; our duties are long and hard, and often they leave us weary. We are to teach humanity to revere the spirits, but sometimes it becomes easier to simply make humanity fear the spirits. Fear is always simpler to nurture than sincere respect, and you have paid the price for my laziness. I have been negligent in my duties, Anjou. I felt your pain in my dreams, and I knew that I was the cause. The way in which I dealt with you was dishonorable, and for that I am truly and deeply sorry."

She looked very vulnerable in that moment, and Anjou averted her gaze.

"Nothing can be done now. It's over. Let us just get on with our lives."

Speaks-With-Shadows' expression was indecipherable. "At the least, you are entitled to a better explanation for things than you received. Phillippe was not a good man in any sense of the term. He was a... a dark being, Anjou, and he was in thrall to the Enemy. He was using you to get to the sept. In my visions, you lay on the ground, staring blankly, your throat slit by your own son. Be very grateful the spirits of Gaia showed you the mercy that they did by forcing the corruption that would have nested into your children's souls outward, and into their bodies. The other way would have been far, far worse for you. In no possible future would Phillippe ever have fulfilled your dreams. All this I should have told you when I first met you, rather than simply giving you an order and assuming you would obey."

Anjou said nothing, blankly horrified at Shadows' statements. After several moments of silence, Shadows decided it would be best to simply change the subject. "Words are sterile. They are the things of the Weaver. Once they are set down they never change. You cannot put being a Theurge into words, Aaron. You should have known that."

The old crone turned to Anjou. "If you are truly interested in understanding what it means to be a Theurge, I can only show you, not tell you."

Fearfully, Anjou nodded. She was surprised to admit she was interested in this for its own sake, rather than just out of practicality. Shadows reached into her robes and withdrew what initially looked like the skeleton of a rat, setting it on the table in front of Anjou. And then it moved. It was, indeed, a tiny undead rat, and something only vaguely like fire gleamed in its eyes. Despite this, it hardly seemed threatening; if anything, Anjou found she wanted to bow like a noble lady before a great knight.

"This is a spirit of birth and rebirth, Anjou. It told me about your children."

When Anjou looked into the pinprick lights in skeletal eye-sockets, the spirit responded by initiating something that was not exactly communication, for humans cannot speak directly to spirits, but might have been the primordial ancestor to speech, millennia past when the world was less complex and more magical. And then Anjou simply under-

stood, and she knew that the thing she had just learned could never be told, only experienced.

"Thank you," she gasped. The skeleton rat chittered silently and settled down on bony haunches, looking content.

Shadows smiled. On her face, it was surreal.

"Anjou, Kinfolk cannot be Theurges, but they have been shamans for many millennia. Humanity has far too few shamans in this age. You are certainly capable, and it might even bring to your life the dignity you so desire. I have wronged you, and in atonement, if you wish it, I will share with you my mysteries and secrets, and begin teaching you the ways that humans revere and speak to the spirits. I mean no pressure by this; I simply realize that your future looks bleak, and I offer you a light. Do not decide now. Think about it."

Anjou nodded slowly. "I... I'll think. I can't say anything now. I'm in shock, to be honest."

The Theurge nodded, and then grasped Anjou tightly on the shoulder. "There is one more thing I am obligated to say to you before we part ways, Anjou. I do not care if you think I am a bitch, or if you tell others as much. It is not my place to care about that kind of thing, and maybe it is even the truth. And whether you believe it or not, I do have compassion for your pain, and wish you all the best of life. But if you are ever again heard speaking of Uktena or Gaia as you were at that bar last night, I will come back here and gut you myself, and hang your entrails by the bawn of the caern as a warning to any others who would blaspheme against the spirits. My auspice demands no less of me."

And then she turned and walked out.

## *Storytelling Notes*

Story's over. Running Theurges can be involved, especially if the Storyteller wants to include mysticism and vision quests in her game. The following advice might spark the imagination; in addition, we present a few new Traits for Theurge characters to choose from.

## *Signs and Wonders*

How exactly should a Storyteller run the mystical world a Theurge lives in? It can seem very daunting, for if you try to storytell a dream scene or add a symbolic omen and it comes off badly, it can seem incredibly clichéd and cheesy. The best advice a Storyteller can be given in this regard is to give players a chance to explore and interact with a mystical world — whether it's the Umbra or just a dream scene — rather than hitting them over the head with a message, railroading them through the exact steps of Campbell's hero's journey or just trying to add spooky ambience with lots of purple adjectives. Remember that storytelling mysticism, just like any other kind of storytelling, should be an interactive activity.

Find some good sources of surrealism and mystical imagery, and adapt it to your own uses. In a private game, there's no reason to be afraid of a little plagiarism, whether you're ripping off St. John's *Revelation*, David Lynch's movies or Neil Gaiman's latest novel. Mythic imagery is not easy

for most people to come up with, and almost always draws on the mythology that has come before it. As long as you are reasonably discreet in lifting things and don't include out-of-genre elements, a healthy collection of inspirations can only be helpful in creating a vividly symbolic world.

Don't expect players to read your mind. The very worst thing you can do is to present an image or encounter that has symbolic importance and expect the player of a Theurge to interpret it exactly the same way that you do. A few players may enjoy butting their heads against an obscure puzzle of symbolism the Storyteller invented, but most won't. Further, unlike a concretely logical enigma (like intrigue or murder mystery) it's almost impossible for players to figure out the "right" interpretation of a symbol or omen. Characters have an Enigmas score for a reason — there's nothing wrong with letting them make a roll to come up with the "correct" (i.e., relevant) interpretation of an omen or symbol.

It's not blasphemous for a Storyteller to either provide symbolism directly with the preferred interpretation ("Glancing at Lord Alistair's grandfather clock, you notice that the pendulum is stuck tight with the webs of spiders. You blink, and the webs are gone, such that you wonder if you ever really saw them. Perhaps this is an omen that he is trying to hold back his own aging with something tied to the Weaver.") or to present symbols with a reasonably obvious interpretation. Even if the players don't have to figure anything out, the presence of metaphors still adds an element of mystery and ambience to the game.

Alternatively, you can use a simple trick that greatly reduces the frustration level of a Theurge player and adds to both the competence of the character and the player's ability to influence the game. Throw out symbols and mythic imagery, then wait and see how the Theurge interprets them and what significance she attributes to them. If her interpretation is reasonable, creative and complex, tailor the game somewhat to match her view to the degree with which you are comfortable, even if it isn't what you originally intended to convey with that omen or piece of mystic imagery. Of course, this should stop immediately if the Theurge player's interpretations and prophecies become a metagamey attempt to benefit the character — but most munchkins aren't interested in mythic imagery anyway, so it's a minor risk.

Know when to keep something off-screen for greater impact. A player might balk at being told that "Vanessa Wyrm-Warder enters the heart of the Flux-Realm Nexus, and her mind opens itself to all creation. Several hours pass before she returns to her packmates, fulfilled but unable to properly articulate any part of the wondrous thing she has just experienced," but what description could the Storyteller give for such a thing that is neither clichéd nor inadequate? By keeping the mystical experience an unknown, the Storyteller keeps it interesting to both Vanessa's player and the rest of her pack, when otherwise it might just be trite.

There is a certain internal consistency to visions, dream imagery and similar facets of mysticism. It's not what we normally call logical, but it's still consistent and by keeping

that element of fairy-tale logic strong, you give players the ability to interact meaningfully with the high weirdness that a very metaphor-laden game can offer. Some of the most common of these “laws of mysticism” are as follows:

- **Like Affects Like** — Contagion is more than just a principle magicians (and Theurges) use in rituals; it is an underlying theme in a large amount of mythology. The heavens, or the Umbra, parallel the Earth, and when one is changed, the other is affected as well. Indeed, many spirit quests are undertaken for the express purpose of healing in the Umbra something that is inaccessible in the real world. Emotional and spiritual qualities that in the real world are hidden behind walls of repression, disbelief or formality may be represented metaphorically in the Umbra — by healing or cleansing the metaphor, the Theurge and her allies can often aid the afflicted people in the real world.

- **Life Is A Story** — Myths are obviously stories, so the real spirit quests and epic journeys that inspire them also have dramatic elements to them. In a world where destiny and fate are real forces, events must play through their natural literary cycle in order to reach their conclusion. Like a story, a mythic journey has a beginning, middle and conclusion, periods of rising tension, evocative camaraderie and aching despair. Unlike normal life in the World of Darkness, which can often be arbitrary (or “postmodern,” in literary terms) things in the Umbra and in visions always happen for a reason, and flow from beginning to natural conclusion. Of course, this certainly doesn’t mean that there’s always a happy ending....

- **Intuitive, not Rational** — Mysticism is not rational, but it is certainly sensible, given a certain mindset. Since a hammer striking rocks makes a sound similar to thunder, it’s perfectly logical that a spirit of Thunder has great experience as a stonemason, or carries a large hammer. The umbilical cord once connected mother to daughter, so of course it could be used later, if kept, to allow a mother to again find her lost (adult) daughter. To modern thought, there are lots of reasons why these things aren’t believable, but that’s not the point: if you limit yourself to thinking in a pre-scientific method manner and go over the connections with common sense and “hearth wisdom” instead of reason, they all seem crystal clear. That’s the right mindset for storytelling the mystical world.

- **Things Are Simpler** — In real life, people are complex things, with dozens of conflicting motivations, different sins and virtues and nuanced life stories that rarely follow a clear theme or pattern. Spirits are simpler than that — they’re iconic, and they ultimately represent a very limited facet of the human experience. Garou, being half-spirit themselves, fall somewhere in between: they can have the complexity of mundane humanity in their daily lives, but they also have a purer, simpler nature at their core, an iconic representation shaped in some part by their tribe, auspice, Nature and their most over-riding goal in life, that comes to the fore when they become involved in epic mysticism or spirit quests. Remember that, and draw your characters — protagonist or otherwise

— with slightly broader, more iconic strokes in the mystical world; leave the complexities and shades of gray to the more mundane stories.

- **The Scales Must Balance** — Apply science’s edict of “every action has an equal an opposite reaction” to the realms of emotion, obligation, morality and metaphysics, and you have this law. Indeed, this describes the overall plot of *Werewolf* — the Wyrm and Weaver are out of balance, and until that balance is restored people will suffer. Every choice has consequences, though who will bear them is not always just in the modern sense — consider the First Theurge’s story here. Sacrifice is often necessary to achieve a goal — to gain a powerful good, one must also suffer great harm. In the physical world, evil is often very rewarding; in the domain of the spirits, however, karma is a very real force, though its backlash may seem harsh and baroque to those affected.

- **Everything is Personal** — The protagonists of a spirit quest are never generic to the quest; what they face will be shaped by their own nature. Two Theurges, sent out into the Umbra on the exact same mission to find exactly identical versions of the same fetish, will tend to have completely different stories to tell when they get back — a mystical journey is based not only on the goal sought, but on the psyche, sins, virtues and passions of the seeker. This applies equally to spirit dealings where the Theurge never leaves the Gaia Realm — it’s still a spirit quest, albeit of a more metaphorical kind. This means that through dealing with spirits, a Theurge will inevitably be brought face to face with the skeletons in her own closet. As a Storyteller, design encounters with spirits for a Theurge based not only on the situation, goal and area, but based on what sorts of spirits, and what demands of chimirage, resonate the most strongly with the Theurge’s character concept.

## New Theurge Gifts

- **Airt Perception (Level One)** — Using this Gift, a Theurge can roughly identify a spirit by its airt — the trail left in the wake of a spirit’s passing. This works essentially like tracking in the corporeal world, and is no more informative — a hunter can tell deer tracks from bison tracks, but can’t learn anything meaningful about an unknown creature. Also, powerful and subtle spirits are often able to disguise their airts. Any ancestor-spirit renowned as a great hunter can teach this Gift.

**System:** Treat this exactly as a Garou identifying and tracking animals (by scent or by looking for tracks, at the Theurge’s discretion), but apply it to spirits instead. Note that Garou may not be able to go everywhere spirits do to follow the trail — remember, spirits can fly.

- **Sense Chimirage (Level One)** — Theurges have ways of knowing all manner of secret things other Garou would wish stayed hidden; with this Gift, they can learn where the balance of chimirage lies with any spiritually aware being with a glance. The Gift reveals if the target has paid all proper obligations to the spirits, if he has ignored a

## *Buying Rituals*

If a Storyteller doesn't want the most powerful rituals known to Garou society in the hands of her newly fledged Garou pack, she's perfectly within her rights to limit players to rituals of Level Three or below when creating Cliath characters. Possession of a very rare or powerful rite should be something that players negotiate with their Storyteller, not assume is an inherent right. Conversely, a Theurge player may want to be a more diverse kind of ritualist than a mere five levels of rites will allow her to be in game. If the Storyteller is inclined to let a player begin as a skilled ritualist, she might allow a Theurge to buy more than five points worth of rites using freebie points. Many Theurge players will want to begin play with the basic Theurge "ritual kit" (Rites of Summoning, Spirit Awakening and Binding). This takes all five possible points in the Rites Background; letting a player buy a few extra tribal or social rites on top of that is not going to throw the game out of balance, especially since freebie points could otherwise be used to raise Rage, Gnosis or Willpower. This optional rule might be especially worthy of consideration in a game where there won't be much opportunity to interact with Garou elders, or where taking the long stretches of downtime needed to learn rites wouldn't be practical.

debt or engaged in blasphemy against his totem or other spiritual patrons. An owl-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** A Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7) reveals the target's state of debt in the spirit worlds; with three or more successes, the Theurge may learn the name of the one spirit the target most recently egregiously wronged, if such a being exists.

• **Spirit Knife (Level Two)** — Using this Gift, a Theurge can imbue a knife — or any other weapon she hand-crafted herself — with the power to strike across the Gauntlet, affecting enemies on the other side. This Gift conveys no ability to see across the Gauntlet beyond what the Garou normally possesses, however. A Wasp-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The Garou spends one Gnosis point, and any single weapon she crafted entirely herself is able to strike creatures on either side of the Gauntlet in any area where the Gauntlet is equal to or lower than her Gnosis. This effect lasts for the duration of the scene.

• **The Spirits' Displeasure (Level Two)** — Theurges use this Gift as a form of mystical warning against those who have offended the spirits. It causes the victim to suffer ill luck, and to witness an omen from his own culture indicating foreboding or cosmological displeasure. Note that many modern people may not recognize an omen as an omen, but they will still find it unsettling by its very nature. A Stormcrow teaches this Gift.

**System:** The Theurge spends a point of Gnosis, burns an effigy of the victim and rolls her Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7); the intended target does not need to be present. Sometime in the same story the Gift is used, the target will botch an important (but not life-threatening) roll automatically, or suffer botch-like effects at one time in his everyday life.

• **Evocation of Ceremony (Level Three)** — Rituals are not used only to evoke supernatural effects; they also have an inherent value to Theurges in and of themselves. Using this Gift, the Garou evokes a sense of awe, reverence and holy mystery through ritualistic behavior — anything from a Garou rite to a Catholic sacrament. Along with any normal mystical effect, the ceremony produces a sense of reaffirmation and cosmological belonging in everybody who participates. While Theurges usually use this effect to strengthen sincere spiritual devotions or build community among Garou, it's just as easily abused to keep participants in a rite in ignorant, dogmatic fear of the supernatural world — the Theurge's intent, not the nature of the Gift, determines which is the case. An enigmatic spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** Any being can attempt to inspire, unify or cow an audience through ritualism with a Charisma + Rituals, Occult, Performance or Subterfuge roll as appropriate to the exact situation. Possession of this Gift increases the Charisma of the Theurge by four dots, only for the purposes of such attempts (to a maximum of nine).

• **Castigate (Level Three)** — The Theurge calls upon the spirits to revoke their favor from another Garou; she must verbally state the target's offenses against the spirit worlds, and the target must be present; if successful, the target loses both Renown and spiritual Gifts. A hyena-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Intimidation against a difficulty equal to the target's [Gnosis + 3]. Each success causes the target to lose one point of temporary Renown for good. In addition, the target loses access to one Gift of the Theurge player's choice for the remainder of the story, of a maximum level equal to the successes rolled.

• **Placation (Level Four)** — Shamans from many diverse cultures are said to know secrets for placating angry ghosts and ancestors — this Gift is one of them. A Theurge with this Gift always knows exactly what kind of sacrifice is necessary to make atonement for an offence against the spirit world, and is skilled in the secret methods of offering it. A spirit from the realm of Erebus teaches this Gift.

**System:** With a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the Theurge learns what she must offer to placate an offended spirit. Usually, as long as both offender and Theurge are sincere, a few points of Gnosis spent is sufficient to restore harmony; if the offender is dead or absent, or the offense is truly great, the spirit courts may require the Theurge take on a geas as chiminage, offer a fetish or undertake a quest. In legendary cases, Theurges have even

been known to surrender their lives to restore the Garou Nation's ties to a wronged Incarna to totem spirit.

• **Prophecy (Level Four)** — This Gift offers the Theurge true insight into the future. Such visions are sporadic and sometimes enigmatic, but unless a specific effort is made to change what is ahead, they are always accurate. An owl-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** This Gift is as much a story element as a power; the player should check with his Storyteller before buying it for a character. Regardless of whether it is possessed by a player character or not, visions come only at the Storyteller's whim and contain whatever information he desires. The Storyteller should obviously avoid depicting player characters' futures in such visions, to avoid turning them into a set piece.

• **Healing the Soul (Level Five)** — Through a week-long ordeal of fasting, trance states and spirit communion, the Theurge is able to set the elements of the Triat into perfect balance within one individual's soul. Obviously, the subject to be healed must be willing, and the two individuals must remain in solitude (save for contact with spirits) for the duration. This Gift can cure insanity, ease emotional wounds, heal the effects of trauma and remove desensitization. If the spiritual injury was caused by ill conduct on the subject's part, however, this Gift can only benefit them once: even the greatest empath has little sympathy for those who willingly slide back into self-degradation after being helped out the first time. An avatar of Unicorn teaches this Gift.

**System:** The effects are largely character and story-based. This Gift alone cannot cure full-blown Harano, but it can certainly ameliorate the causes, preventing it before it takes hold completely.

If the Storyteller has already embraced the complications of mechanical crossover in her Werewolf chronicle, she may elect to allow this Gift to restore one or two levels of Humanity, or subtract one or two levels of permanent Angst, once in a given vampire or wraith's life. Of course, very few Garou elders would ever consider wasting Gaia's blessings on a Leech, even a penitent one.

• **Poisoned Legacy (Level Five)** — This most terrible Gift allows the Theurge to lay a great and malicious curse upon a victim of her choice. Such a stigma is irreversible, and will remain with the victim for all her life. The victim must be present, and the Theurge must verbally state her malediction. A spirit of hatred, or an animal spirit of a highly venomous animal, teaches this Gift.

**System:** The Theurge spends a point of Gnosis and a point of Willpower, then rolls Manipulation + Occult against a difficulty of the target's Willpower as she pronounces the curse. With one to five successes, the Theurge can inflict the *Cursed* Flaw on her target at a level equal to the successes rolled; the Storyteller chooses an appropriately poetic manifestation. With six or more successes, the Theurge can instead choose to inflict the *Dark Fate* Flaw.

• **Invoked Presence (Level Six)** — By using this awesome Gift, the Theurge can call upon an Incarna or Celestine directly, bringing their focus to bear on the area around him. This does not summon an Avatar; rather, the presence is a mystical permeation of the principle the invoked spirit represents. The Theurge will later need to repay the debt owed to the spirit he invoked before he can use this Gift again; this typically entails a strong geasa, an extended spirit quest or the sacrifice of a valuable fetish. Any Celestine's avatar can teach this Gift.

**System:** The Theurge spends five points of Gnosis and the presence of a Celestine or Incarna is made manifest within a 180 yard radius globe around her for several hours. Essentially, this Gift is like a sustained, area-effect form of *Totem Gift*, and the effects are thus highly variable dependant upon which greater power the Garou chooses to invoke. The following three effects are constant:

- Any actions that directly support the principle of the invoked spirit have a number of dice equal to the Theurge's Gnosis added to their dice pool. In the case of combat, only one type of combat roll (attack, damage, dodge, initiative, etc.) will be so enhanced.

- Attempting to take any action directly antithetical to the invoked spirit requires three successes on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8), and even then, the action will be rolled at +2 difficulty.

- The spirit will send members of its Brood equivalent in power to a full pack of Rank One Garou to the site to aid the Theurge and his allies immediately.

Beyond this, the effects are dependant on the power the Theurge chose to invoke; Unicorn may simply make any act of violence impossible in the area; a Harvest Incarna may cause all the plants in the area to grow to rich and healthy maturity in minutes, while invoking the Weaver might make the Gauntlet utterly impenetrable.

## New Background

### Spirit Network

The falcon-spirit wheeled three times over Marya's head before settling on her shoulder and rubbing its head against her cheek. It chirped softly into her ear, like a chick with its mother.

"Very good, my daughter," Marya crooned. "Very helpful. Now go and tell the others."

This Background is something of a spiritual equivalent of Contacts. A Theurge possessing the Spirit Network Background has cultivated good relations with the minor wisp-spirits and Gafflings in a given area, and is thus able to gain information about what transpires therein — even if the events she wants to learn about were unobserved in the real world, they were likely witnessed by some spirit or another. This Background is one of the reasons that Theurges are often privy to information they have no mundane way of knowing.

To see if a Theurge can turn up information about a specific event from spirits, she must first spend several hours in the Umbra talking with different spirits (via the Gift, *Spirit Speech*). Then, roll her Spirit Network rating against a difficulty of the Gauntlet where the event occurred. This may only be attempted once for any given event. One success gives a vague description, while three or more mean that the Theurge will get a fairly complete rundown. Regardless of successes, however, the description will still be given from the perspective of spirits, which may miss out on important details that have no strong spiritual resonance (like detailed financial or political information).

A Theurge can also receive however much random gossip and minor secrets the Storyteller wishes by means of

this Background, simply through daily communication with spirits. Of course, this is a wonderful way to introduce a new plot hook or adventure.

- You have a few spirits on the lookout for interesting information.
- .. Several spirits are willing to share what they have seen with you.
- ... You have unseen eyes in countless different locations at any time.
- .... Spirits far and wide seek out information and report strange happenings to you.
- ..... Unless the Gauntlet is extremely high, very little escapes the notice of your watcher-spirits.



BRIDGES '03

# Chapter Three: Law and Order

Pain comes from the darkness, and we call it wisdom.

— Randall Jarrell

O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts.

— Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

## Scales

I could've taken the quicker road and begged our Gatekeeper for access to the caern, but for some reason, I needed to drive tonight, to see the ribbon of road stretch off into the distance. It was pretty country; I could tell that by the half moonlight. Fog-etched mountains, the shadow of deciduous forests and the distant tinkle of a stream kept me company. The road itself would've been hell on anyone with a weak stomach, what with all the turns and twists. Myself, I rather liked it.

My companion seemed to recognize my need for silence. Meredith Aubrey, or Heart of the Sky as she now was known, was pretty new to all this, just having returned from her Rite of Passage about a moon earlier. I sensed her unease about this odd expedition. Well, we'd see what was up. Maybe we could help, maybe not.

Good thing the young Moon Dancer who gave me a call provided explicit directions. Damn, even the best tracker could get lost in these parts. Even though I felt the presence of a caern nearby, I doubt I'd have found it if not for the heads up.

I preferred not to think about the reception we'd get. The Child of Gaia took a big chance dragging in an outsider, reputation or not, and technically, my sidekick hadn't been invited. A bunch of Uktena and Shadow Lords, just what I wanted. And a few Fianna thrown in for good measure. I'd thought long and hard about whether or not to actually show up, but then I remembered the charge my mentor laid on me after my Rite of Passage: Find the balance of truth, though it has three edges, no matter what the price.

Tonight, someone was gonna pay dearly.

## Origins and Legends

I parked the truck way outside the bawn and prepared to howl my greeting, motioning for Meredith to do the same. You'd think I'd have it perfected by now, but to be honest, I'm always a little nervous; first impressions count for a lot. I took a deep breath and began.

"Greetings to the Sept of the Glass Hand! I am called Elaine Edwards by the humans, Balance of Truth among Gaia's warriors, Athro, judge and Philodox, mother and

daughter of the Black Furies. I ask to be received as I have been invited, with open heart and open mind."

"Also receive my greetings. I am Meredith Aubrey, Heart of the Sky, newly called to Gaia's throng, Half-Moon Cliath of the Black Furies." Not bad, I thought.

We waited. Presently, a howl sounded in return, a beautiful voice made even more stirring by the mix of moon and fog that surrounded the clearing.

"Welcome to Elaine, Balance of Truth, and Meredith, Heart of the Sky. I am called Song of Peace, Child of Gaia, Moon Dancer and Fostern of the Bloody Tusk pack of the Sept of the Glass Hand."

A female wolf trotted out from the darkness, graceful and lithe, with golden brown fur. As she approached, I noted that one eye was dark and the other light, reflecting no shine of the moon. Yet she had no scar. A metis, then, half-blind, I reasoned. This deal got worse all the time. If her sept-mates didn't trust her, they probably wouldn't like us, either. Great. But we were guests, so I shrugged aside my concern.

"Thank you for your welcome, Song of Peace." I acknowledged her lowered head and downcast eyes with a nod of my own. The metis cocked a head at my companion, who politely downcast her glance in respect. "Have the packs of your sept assembled?"

The wolf's form blurred until a slender young woman stood before us, clad in a plain denim skirt and t-shirt, short dark hair hanging slightly in her face. "Not exactly. I thought we might talk a bit first. You can call me Joan, by the way. I've got a small cabin near the edge of the bawn."

We trekked over the uneven ground to the one-room cabin. Inside, the furnishings were simple: a couple of wooden chairs, a bedstead with a patchwork quilt, a table and an icebox. Thick cotton rugs covered the floor. Meredith and I sat and waited as Joan poured tea from the waiting pot on the fire.

"You got here earlier than I expected," she said, and I detected a note of unease in her voice.

"Well, the matter seemed important enough," I replied. "You said your pack leader was facing unjust punishment and that the sept elders had agreed to hear a neutral opinion from an outside judge."

Joan looked at me and shrugged. "I didn't exactly explain the whole situation. Now, before you claw open my innards, please listen a moment."

"You'd better make it good," I snarled. "If you've pulled me away from my own sept on a whim, you'll have more to contend with than a few new scars." I felt Meredith tense at my side, but she made no further move.

Her chin lifted. "Fair enough. Here's the situation... the whole situation. My pack leader, Gerhard Turner, is a Shadow Lord. He's been accused of killing another packmate, a Black Fury and Philodox, like you. Our sept leader doesn't like Gerhard, and I think he's taking some

shaky evidence at face value to get rid of Gerhard so his own position isn't threatened."

"Sounds awful political to me. Is the sept leader a Shadow Lord?"

Joan shook her head. "An Uktena, and one well known. This caern used to be tended by them, but they abandoned it for some reason, and the Lords took it over. Then, when they got wiped out in a Black Spiral attack some months ago, the Uktena came back. Gerhard was one of the few survivors of the Shadow Lords' sept. Calvin Hicks, that's our sept leader, grudgingly let him stay. We've built back our strength, and now there's three packs altogether. The Moor Hunters are three, Fianna and Get of Fenris. The Low Valley Pack are the Uktena. And finally, there's us, the Bloody Tusks. Gerhard and me. Steven's a Fianna Ahroun. Denise is another Child of Gaia, a Crescent Moon. Nancy's the one that died, supposedly at Gerhard's hand."

"So to boil it down to brass tacks," I interjected, "Calvin wants Gerhard out, even if means some sneaky tactics. Lovely. Sounds like this whole bunch are way too interested in their own glory rather than that of the sept."

"That's about it." Joan shrugged. "I figured you'd want to talk to everyone, look at the evidence. But no one knows you're here. Yet."

A long hiss, which may have started as a sigh, escaped my lips. "Listen, young Galliard. Do you know much about the history of the Half-Moons? What they do? Why they are?" She shook her head. "Well, pour us some more tea. I need to get my brain back onto the business at hand, and I'm going to focus on my moon to do it. One of my most cherished duties is teaching other Furies to tread the path of the Philodox, and I'm not going to let your request interrupt my student's education — it's going to add to it. In the future, maybe you'll know better than to invite a Half-Moon on a whim, and my learner here will become a better judge of when to speak and when to be silent." What I didn't say was talking sure was better than letting my temper flare up and onto this innocent goody-two-shoes. That would be a pretty poor example to set for Heart of the Sky, wouldn't it?

### *Habits of the Whole*

You'll forgive me if I'm not as flowery at this tale telling as you. I'm more used to listening than telling, if you get my drift.

Each tribe has a different story about how the Garou came to be Gaia's warriors, spirits clad in flesh. I won't bore you with the generalities. What's sometimes left out of those sagas, though, is how Gaia decided to split the duties of her warriors. It's true, of course, we're all good scrappers. But Gaia was wise enough to realize that not all the work of a good soldier is done on the battlefield. Some of it is behind the scenes, and that's where the Half-Moons have a great place.

All right, back to the past. For good or ill, it's been the Half-Moons who've guided the werewolves' path. Some Ahroun would argue that point, but think about it, and you know I'm telling the truth. Who helped bring about the end of the War of Rage? A Child of Gaia Philodox. Which auspice directed the creation of the Concordiat? Damn if it wasn't the Half-Moons. And who arrived just in recent years to kick Jonas Albrecht's butt into high gear so he could claim the Silver Crown? Well, I'll be damned, it was that wise young fellow, Evan Heals-the-Past. A Philodox, if you can imagine that.

### *Fame and Infamy*

I should probably note a few of the more famous Half-Moons you ought to know. Maybe you could even remember them in your stories or songs, but I'll let you be the judge of that.

Among your tribe, of course, there's the notorious Cries Havoc. I'm not sure how he manages to preserve the Veil with those large horns of his, but I have to give the guy some credit. He's got guts trying to get the tribes and packs to work together. We also give a special place to the Child of Gaia called Lore-Speaker Gron, whose wise words helped end the Impergium, as I mentioned before.

I do know quite a few legendary Half-Moons from my own tribe, of course. My teacher and mentor, Daphne Theophiledes, is an elder known for leading the Sept of Ariadne's Web, near Washington D.C. Another great Fury Philodox was Kendra Stevenson, who helped found one of the first schools for women in the American West. The sad thing about her is that her end fate is unknown; she disappeared in the San Francisco area during the turn of the century.

Strangely enough, I can't recall any Bone Gnawer or Fianna Philodox who've become well known. Of the latter, it seems, only the warriors and songkeepers of that tribe get major credit. Pity, as I think they could do with some balance in their lives. The same is true of the Red Talons; for good or ill, they have little to do with our tribe, except for the small number of lupus among us.

Furies and Get may not get along too well, but I give credit where it's due. Karin Jarlsdottir has shown herself to be a capable leader, one that at least gives a pretense of thought before action. Maybe there's hope for some reconciliation between our tribes, if she's representative of what the Get of Fenris are becoming. I know a good deal less about Thunder's Teeth, an ancient Get lupus that lives in Finland and serves as one of the unofficial leaders of the entire tribe. Few from this side of the pond have ever seen him, though his reputation is that of a warrior and hunter of legend.

While the Glass Walkers keep to themselves more than ever, which I think is stupid, I've nonetheless heard of a Philodox among them called Elizabeth Genereader. If the Walkers had a leader, I think she'd be it. Rumors have filtered out from Europe that she's quite the mover and shaker.

Speaking of Shadow Lords, Anatoly Maseryk is leader of the Thunderstrike Sept in the Ural Mountains. Word has it that he's a better conciliator than his predecessor. Wonder if this guy is going to work with Konietzko or against him? And as far as Konietzko goes, if you haven't heard of him yet, you will soon. Apparently, he's the leader of some sort of huge European coalition, even though he's not a Philodox.

You may know more about this than I do, but the Silent Striders tell of one of their Half-Moons who may or may not have a dark fate ahead. This Philodox is an Australian metis called Grek Twice-Tongue. Rumor has it that he's going to somehow restore the Bunyip—either by finding them or else helping the werewolves absolve their guilt over that unfortunate mess.

The Stargazers, as you know, have officially left the Garou Nation, but that doesn't mean they all packed up and headed back to the east. One of the more renowned (and definitely perplexing) members of the tribe is a Philodox named Antonine Teardrop. He stayed behind for his own reasons, possibly trying to make some massive effort at uniting the werewolves under one banner of allegiance. I say, good luck, because he sure has some tough odds working against him.

I've already mentioned one of King Albrecht's packmates, the Wendigo Evan Heals-the-Past. There's another werewolf of note among the so-called Pure Ones you might note, and that's the Uktena lupus Philodox Lamurum, down in Australia. I think he hung around with Grek for a time, but latest rumor has it that Lamurum has made his way to the Americas. No one really knows why.

I saved the best for last. Though it seems odd to me, many of the great Silver Fang leaders have been Theurges or Ahroun. One exception was the late Collette Delacourt, a Fang from down New Orleans way. She's one of the great "what ifs" among us Half-Moons. All indications were that she was headed for a lifetime of wisdom, for even in her youth, she worked with many tribes, even the outcast Bone Gnawers. When her dismembered body showed up in a tainted swamp, all hell broke loose, with blame falling on the Shadow Lords. The truth of her fate is still unknown.

Well, there's some fodder for your tales, young Galliard, and a quick history lesson for you, Meredith. Now, back to the heart of the matter: What it means to be a Half-Moon.

## *The Measure of the Anspice*

Over the centuries, as I've told you, we've gained fame, or notoriety, as leaders in times of peace, advisors in times of war and judges whenever and wherever we're needed. I can't stress to you how inevitable and right this is, how essential to our being. You, Galliard, can't help the inborn love of song and pretty words. By the same token, Meredith and I can't resist the need and desire to bring things into balance and stability. We as Half-Moons have an eye for order; it's just who we are. Without rules and the implementation of them, we'd degenerate into a bunch of mindless killers. The Litany and our tribal customs, enforced by the Half-Moons, keep us all in check.

So let's discuss duty for a moment. It's a Gaia-given obligation for the Philodox to step in and take up authority when she sees it's needed. Sometimes that means working alongside the Ahroun as an advisor. Other times, it's delegating duties as she deems fit. You know we're also the judges and juries of the werewolves; that's why I'm here talking to you today. You must also realize that it's sometimes hard to see justice served. Being a leader requires you to make difficult decisions. I'm talking about gut-wrenching stuff, like sending a pack on what's surely a suicide mission, because it's for the good of the sept or the Garou as a whole. It's about punishing those who violate the Litany, since those

laws were made to protect us and keep our honor intact, even if you have sympathy for the law-breakers. It's about going among a bunch of strangers and ferreting out the truth, whatever the cost, because it's the right thing to do.

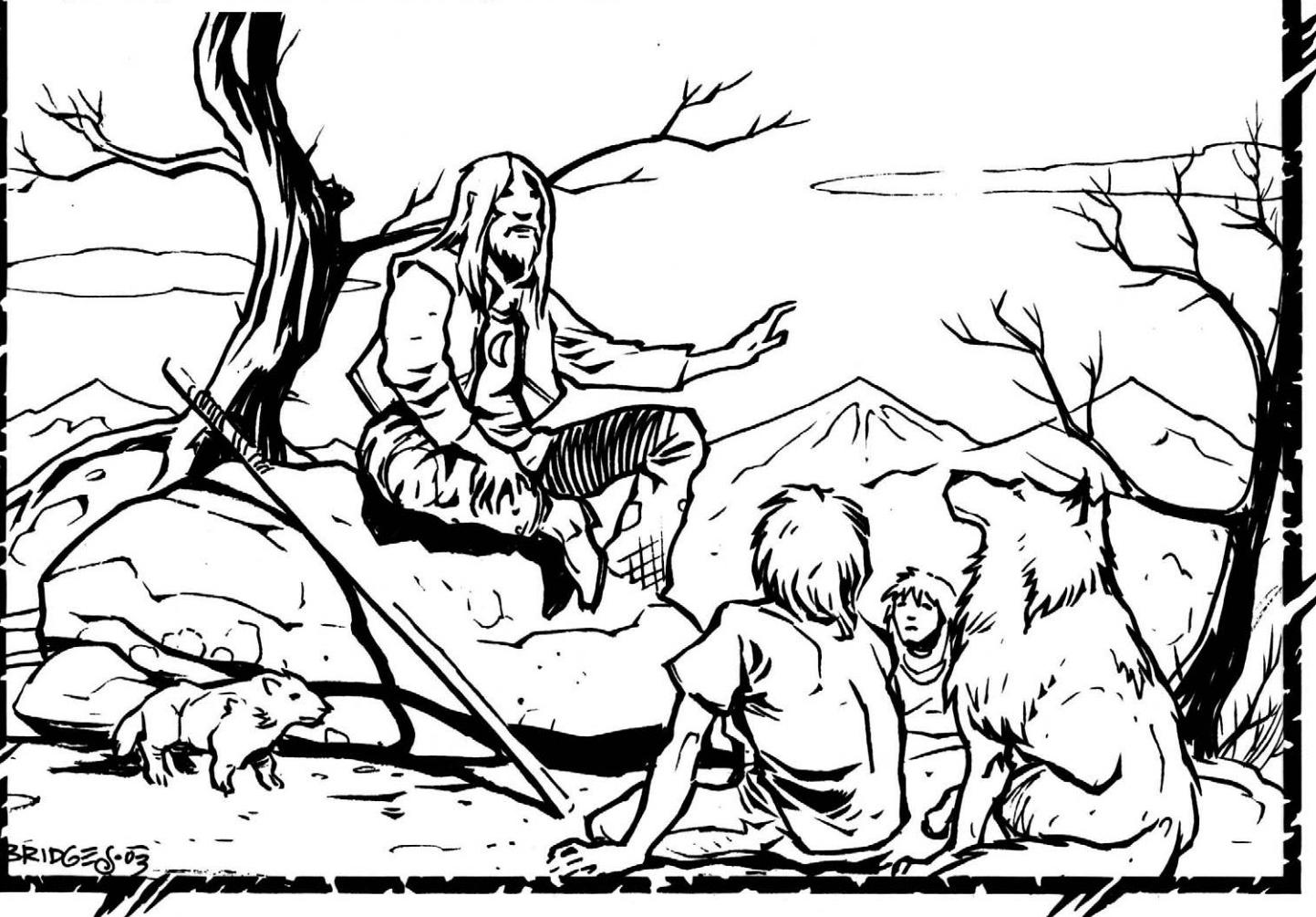
Timidly, Meredith interrupted me. "What about the distinctions among the Philodox? Is it true that those of the waxing and waning moons take different perspectives on duty? I haven't met enough to really know yet."

Well, if you ask me, the differences are pretty subtle. Still, some among us say that those born in the time of the waxing moon seem partial to being moderators and arbitrators. Those birthed under the waning moon may have a propensity for maintaining order and balance. I think those distinctions are too cut and dried, personally. Any Philodox worth spit is always going to be concerned with stability, as well as a sense of truth and justice.

## *Sept Roles*

I stirred as footsteps approached the cabin. Joan rose and answered the door. I wasn't surprised to see a man with black hair and stern eyes standing there. I rose and nodded my head. Meredith rounded her shoulders a bit, not quite flinching, but clearly recognizing an elder when she saw one.

"You must be the leader of this sept, Calvin Hicks. I am Elaine, Balance of Truth."



He tilted his chin down a hair. "Yes. I heard of your coming from the wind. Half-Moon of the Black Furies, you were not summoned by me. We can tend our affairs without the help of outsiders." He didn't even give my sidekick a glance.

He was pissed, resentful and insulted, not necessarily in that order. Perhaps it was time to apply some balm to relax his hackles.

"I'm sure that's true," I replied in a cool tone. "If I'm not needed, Gaia knows I'll leave. But do me a courtesy, and allow me to extend a hand of friendship. I meet few Uktena where I live, and my young student and I are talking about the roles Luna and Gaia have given us to your Moon Dancer. Perhaps as a descendent of the Pure Ones, you could tell us what you see as the important responsibilities of the Half Moon."

He frowned, but after a moment, took the cup that Joan held out to him, and sat down on the remaining empty chair. He gave Heart of the Sky a quick look, but said nothing directly to her.

As I lead this Sept of the Glass Hand, to me the primary role of the Philodox is one of leadership and setting an example. I speak of peace times, for in days of war, I likewise believe that the warriors of the full moon can best direct our path. This is an old custom among my people, the Cherokee, to have two chiefs, one for peace and one for war. Most of Gaia's children see the wisdom of this as well.

Within the sept, the Half-Moon must be one who knows everything. He should speak with the young and the old alike, keeping an ear to the ground, listening for shouts of victory as well as whispers of sadness. He must know those who are his equals, his betters and his subordinates, what stirs their blood and stimulates their minds; how else can he make the best decisions for the packs? Also, the Philodox who leads the sept cannot ask anyone else to do what he would not. So, he must lead by example; it's a poor chief who will not do the tasks he commands others to do, even if they are mean and brutal.

In deciding who will lead the sept, I believe in competition, not just of fighting with claw and tooth, but also with cunning and shrewdness. Maybe the Get of Fenris have to solve all their challenges with blood, but not the Uktena. When a young one comes to me wanting to be tested, I look to his heart and head, not his fist. What strikes fear in him? What mettle can I strike that cannot be seen? How will he respond to the duties of higher rank, the risks, the dangers? I choose the task that won't necessarily pit him against a foe, but rather the enemy within himself.

The sept is the backbone of our society; the packs are the hands, feet and eyes. When I agreed to lead this

sept, I knew that sometimes I would have to make decisions I disliked because they were for the betterment of the sept as a whole rather than the good of one pack or even one werewolf. If you snap a wolf's spine in half, she dies. But you can put out one eye or take away one hand, and she still lives. If I must make a decision that will cause pain, I will always choose to hurt the pack or the individual rather than the sept as a whole.

As far as the specific duties of a Half-Moon, I imagine my people have similar ideas to your own. We both know that in the structure of the sept, nearly any auspice can hold any office. However, there are tendencies to serve in certain roles. A Grand Elder who speaks for the council of elders, the Gatekeeper who meets with other tribes and the Truthcatcher who mediates disputes are most often Half-Moons. The latter two positions in particular are apt for one who is a judge and arbitrator. In our sept, a Philodox may also serve as Master of the Rite or Master of the Challenge. Sometimes, a Galliard may have a stronger voice, but the Philodox often has the clearer vision. In all cases, though, the privilege of a sept office should go to the werewolf who will do the best job.

Does that answer your question, Black Fury?

"Perfectly," I responded. "I would be a poor guest indeed if I didn't honor the wisdom of your years and experience." Inside, though, I figured he'd painted an awful rosy picture of things. Something in my gut told me that all wasn't as it seemed here. Time to dig a little.

### Pack Roles

"I realize, Calvin, that I am in your territory, and I respect those boundaries. However, we're here. And we are both willing to help get to the bottom of things. Do you mind if we stay and at least talk to some of the other sept members? If we've given you cause for offense, we'll leave in the morning. But it's a long trip. And my conscience bothers me, to think that I'd be doubly failing in the charge of my mentor, Daphne Theophiledes, called Silverweft, that I seek to serve Gaia's love of the truth wherever I go and serve as a guide to the young Philodox among us." I looked at Meredith.

The Uktena bristled a little at my namedropping. Good. Daphne herself would've applauded; she'd have smelled the same stench of wrongness here that I did. "The Rite of Silver Death comes in three days, when the gibbous moon swells. You have until then to ask your questions, and then you must leave. What follows is the business of the sept and not for strangers." With that, he rose and walked out the door.

Three days. Damn. It'd have to be time enough. And the Rite of the Silver Death was particularly nasty, involving among other things a curse of weakness and virtual evisceration. Not pretty.

Joan had remained quiet through our conversation. "He doesn't like you much, but he respects you," she murmured. "So, do you want to talk to the others now?"

I rose and stretched. "Yeah. So much for sleep. Take us to the rest of your pack." Meredith nodded her agreement.

We hiked about a mile into the denser woods. The smell — it gave me something I'd forgotten. Nothing like dew-damp ferns and the wash of water over mossy rock to renew your senses.

In an open grove stood a small cabin, even tinier than Joan's. Two shapes stood out front, one on four legs, the other on two. They tensed as we approached, but must've recognized the Moon Dancer's scent.

"Nightsong, Finella. This is Elaine, the Half-Moon I asked to come, and her pupil, Meredith. Black Furies, these are members of the Moor Hunters."

The wolf came to me, and I knelt to greet her as an equal, admiring her great beauty—sleek, dark fur and tawny eyes. I was pleased to note her welcome to Meredith, polite and warm, as a grandmother greets a cherished granddaughter. The young warrior Finella lowered her spear and gave us both a nod.

"We're guarding the prisoner," she said, matter-of-factly. "Not a happy duty, but a necessary one."

"We'd like to see him." I met her gaze, and with a shrug, she opened the door.

As we stepped inside, I felt a chill seep into my bones. This place was entropy, nothingness. It had been sliced off from the spirit world with a fell stroke. I gritted my teeth and looked down at the man sitting against the far wall, his dark eyes glittering in the pale silver light filtering through the door's cracks.

Daphne told me initial impressions reflect much. The first one I felt was misery. I flinched at the despair coming from the Shadow Lord. As a rule, like most Furies, I didn't trust them. But this guy's anguish seemed pretty damn genuine. I heard an audible gasp from Meredith; she must have felt it, too.

"Boy, it must be bad if old Stoneface let some outsider in." The prisoner's tone held a slight edge of arrogance, or maybe gallows humor. But he scrambled to his feet after a moment passed.

"You've got a sharp tongue for a killer," I snapped. "I wouldn't go shooting off at the mouth if I were about to be cut from crotch to crown."

He shrugged. "I know who you are, Elaine Balance of Truth. You've got quite a rep even among the Half-Moons of my tribe. Welcome, for what it's worth, to your and your fellow Black Fury. And as for my sharp tongue, it's all I've got left."

"Good thing you're no Galliard, then," I replied. Dammit, I didn't want to feel sorry for this guy or even like him. But I did. Something about his youth appealed to me. And I don't know what it was — a sign from Pegasus or maybe just pure,

stupid, unexplainable gut instinct—but I knew this guy hadn't killed anyone in cold blood. Oh, no doubt he could do so. But I didn't think he'd murdered his packmate.

"Sit down," I sighed, and plopped onto the ground myself. Meredith leaned up against the doorway, watching and waiting. "Let's just talk a minute. Tell me the whole story. I make no promises to you or anyone else except to find the truth of what happened."

"That's fair," he answered. "Well, for starters, I'm Gerhard Turner, a Philodox like yourself. A Shadow Lord, but don't hold it against me too much." He flashed a quick grin. "I'm sure you'll be utterly impartial. Anyway, I guess things started going bad when we invited the Uktena."

"What do you mean, invited the Uktena?" I asked.

"As I understand it from my cousin, who used to be part of this sept, a long time ago, the Uktena lived here and claimed it as their own. No one knows how or why, but they abandoned the caern." I flinched, but he continued without noticing. "So the Shadow Lords took over. They lived here and protected the caern until just a couple of years ago. A whole hive of Black Spirals swarmed in and killed nearly all the Kinfolk and sept members. In fact, the only people left were me and another pack member, Denise, a Child of Gaia, because we had the stupid luck to be meeting with some other werewolves at a sept due east of here. When we got home, everything was a mess. Well, hell, we were barely past our Rite of Passage and had no idea what to do. A couple of Kinfolk had survived, barely, and one of them knew about the Uktena north of here. Eventually, we invited them to come here and help us guard the caern. I mean, two of us simply couldn't handle the job."

I nodded gently. "Go on."

"Time passed, and others came to join us. Nancy, Denise, Joan and I formed a pack, and later on, Steven came in. Odd as it may seem, we worked pretty well together. Nancy and I both sort of took charge, making plans and directing things. We were all about the same age and rank, and we led the assault against the Spirals who'd killed my Kin. Although the Uktena held most of the major positions in the caern leadership, we were getting a rep of our own. And Nancy and I wanted to have a say in things."

Gerhard paused a moment and looked me in the eye. "I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to head the sept and our pack. Part of my idea of what makes a good Philodox is that they lead, particularly by example. And Nancy was a tough opponent. If we'd had to compete for it, I don't know that I'd have won. But I would have followed her and trusted her, if she'd beaten me. That's another job of the Philodox as I see it — to be the first and best at serving whoever's in charge. I would have supported her because to do so would be to perform at my best for the pack. If I couldn't be in charge, at least I could advise and offer my counsel."

I thought on that a moment. "Speaking of that, what about the rest of your pack?"

"Joan's a good kid, but she kind of has her head in the clouds, daydreaming and making up songs. Denise spends most of her days inside the bawn or the Umbra. And Steven is a good fighter, but he's what I'd call a stereotypical Fianna — no discipline at all. It was either Nancy or me."

"You realize that with Nancy gone, you'd have one less opponent," I countered.

He stiffened, and I saw anger enter his dark eyes. "I did not have to stoop to murder to defeat her," he snarled. "Something shitty is going on here, and you haven't heard the rest of the story. And you've obviously got a poor idea of what it means to be a Philodox in a pack, as opposed to running around judging people, if you think I'd kill her for such a reason." My hackles rose, but I stomped on the anger. Words now, blows later, if it came to that. I motioned for him to continue.

"So, we'd been taking turns leading and planning things. We held pack meetings fairly often, and set up a sort of caper chart on who would pull guard duty and so on. Nancy and I made the final decisions, but everyone had a say. But after Nancy and I announced our intentions to Calvin and the rest of the sept at the last moot, things got pretty tense. The Uktena weren't happy at all, but of course, they didn't say anything to us. Then, two days ago, Joan found Nancy's body, butchered, just outside the bawn. Her fetish, a Feather of Ma'at, she called it, was missing. There was a search, and it showed up in my cabin, of all places. I have no idea how it got there."

I mentally chewed on that a moment. "Sounds like some sort of Silent Strider thing. Where'd she get it?"

"No idea," replied Gerhard. "But she traveled a lot before settling down here, so who knows? Anyway. That's all it took for Calvin to throw the book at me."

"Did he ask the spirits for aid? Didn't he find out if you were lying or not?"

He laughed, short and bitter. "Sure he did. He asked everyone in the whole damn sept if they knew anything about Nancy's death. Everybody said no, and they apparently all told the truth."

I shook my head. "I don't understand. Why blame you on such flimsy evidence? That doesn't seem particularly just or fair."

"For a judge, you're pretty innocent. Don't you get it? It was enough for him to say that I was guilty, that finding the fetish was sufficient, that somehow, I'd managed to conceal my part in her murder. He said there were ways of covering up the truth, and he was sure that'd be part of a Shadow Lord's upbringing." Gerhard let his chin drop to his chest. "The Uktena have their own reasons for not caring too much what

happens to me. If I'm out of the picture, there's nobody to challenge their claim to the caern or the leadership of the sept."

I paused and considered. "Then let me see for myself." My eyes stung as I whispered softly, feeling the flow of warmth from my own body outward to this fellow Half-Moon, calling upon one of Gaia's blessing to her Philodox. "Gerhard, did you kill your packmate? Did you take her fetish?"

"No," he answered, firmly and with conviction. And I knew the truth of it. He was innocent. Or at least he believed he was.

"Well, that's that," I said, after a moment had passed. "I'm going to talk to your other pack members and then give Calvin a piece of my mind."

I stormed out with no further explanations, Meredith on my heels. Joan waited in the shadows, while Nightsong and Finella talked quietly amongst themselves. Time to sound out my thoughts.

"Moon Dancer, you and your packmates please join us up at your cabin in an hour. I want to talk a bit with Meredith before we speak to them."

### *Tribal Perspectives*

We made the trek back to Joan's cozy little retreat, and I poured another cup of hot tea for us both. After a while, I spoke.

"This may not have been the best way for you to learn after all," I sighed. I was loath to admit it, but feared I'd stepped out of my bounds, out of my league.

"Why in Gaia's name would that be?" asked Meredith, surprised. "I've learned quite a lot already. I mean, you don't think the Shadow Lord is guilty, do you?"

I shrugged. "No... but there's something different here. Oh sure, I've adjudicated lots of disagreements among my Black Fury sisters, but this whole multi-tribal thing is kind of new to me. I admit that there's strength in diversity, but geez, this place sure as hell isn't the Garou UN, and I'm no diplomat."

"Well, if it makes you feel better, let me tell you what I've picked up on," she responded, with a hopeful look. "For starters, this place is kind of a mess. Instead of working together to fight the Wyrm or the Weaver, this whole sept has turned into a nest of leeches. Politicking. Vying for power. It's not right, is it?"

She sounded so mournful, I had to chuckle. "It's a clusterfuck, all right, but don't worry about it. Stereotypes don't always hold true, but in this case, the Uktena's secrets and the Shadow Lord's reputations have sure been at loggerheads."

Meredith gave me a long look, and then spoke again. "Do tribes make a difference in how we do our job?"

I paused to consider that.



### *Black Furies*

Among the Furies, we respect each auspice equally. All have a place as maiden, mother and crone. You may call it ego, but I think the Philodox stands at the center of the Black Fury culture. She interprets the Litany, decides on punishments and metes out justice. Some criticize us for being too attuned to the Weaver, but as always, it's a matter of balance. In my tribe, Half-Moons share both facts and wisdom. They don't have to be the same, but they do have to be true. The hardest part of the job, at least from my perspective, is considering both the letter of the law and the spirit of the law.

### *Bone Gnawers*

I kind of like the Gnawers' outlook on the meaning of balance and the place of the Philodox. Perhaps more than most tribes, their Half-Moons don't just consider themselves judges, but also advocates of both sides of the Garou nature. Yep, I'm talking about human and wolf. Like we Furies, they're often activists for mortals in need of some justice and fairness. They also take the side of those who are downtrodden and forgotten. Needless to say, we're often on the same side when it comes to serving the interests of truth. Oh, and be careful if you ever try to con something out of a Bone Gnawer Philodox; they're whizzes at wheeling and dealing.

### *Children of Gaia*

I remember a Stephen King short story where a well-intentioned peacemaker got a knife in the throat for his troubles. And no offence to this tribe, but that's what I fear may happen to many a Child of Gaia Philodox. They take their roles as peacemakers quite literally, ready to throw down their lives in order to keep things harmonious and serene. I admire their courage, but to be an effective intermediary, you've got to stay alive. Still, the Gaian Half-Moons have much renown as the best teachers among the Garou, and that deserves a lot of respect.

### *Fianna*

Honestly, I don't have any personal bias against the Fianna, really I don't. On the other hand, I don't envy their Half-Moons; they've got one hell of a job. First and foremost, their task is keeping folks in line, no easy task considering the strong passions and lack of, um, self-control among the tribe. And while I don't know why the role fell to the Philodox, they're also responsible for setting up matches between Fianna and Kin. I personally find that old-fashioned, if not downright sexist, but to each their own. Something to remember is that the Half-Moons of this tribe usually have the strongest resolve of any Fianna. Good to know when you have to deal with one that's pissed at you.

### *Get of Fenris*

The Fenrir call their Half-Moons Forseti; I don't know the exact meaning of the word, but if you hear it, at least you'll get the reference. These guys are totally by-the-book. They interpret the Litany strictly and allow little leeway. No doubt you've heard of their harsh punishments for even small infractions, but hell, at least they don't pretend to be anything other than hard-asses. You meet a Fenris Philodox, at least you know what you're getting into; there aren't any shades of gray. One thing that even I can admire, though, is how carefully the Forseti recall the laws, mores and customs of their tribe. If we need to say something good about them, and I suppose I should, then let it be that they regard tradition and the past with great reverence.

### *Glass Walkers*

The Glass Walkers, perhaps not surprisingly, put a different twist on the role of the Philodox. Here, the Half-Moons are [cough] managerial types. Oh, I don't necessarily mean they're the business executives, but they might well be. They accumulate money, counsel those in need and even make sure the werewolves and Kin get spiritual and physical healing. I guess you could say they're whizzes at multi-tasking. In the remaining hours of the day, they do more typical Philodox stuff, such as interpreting law and judging disputes.

### *Red Talons*

Remember what I said about the Get not understanding shades of gray? Well, quadruple that for the Talons' Half-Moons. They see the entire world only in dualities: Black and white, right and wrong, wolf and human. The Talon Philodox will listen to both sides of a story (never mind if there are three or more), and then make her decision. I can't blame them for being so... two-dimensional; I mean, it's their quintessential nature, isn't it? Still, it's just one more thing that makes dealing with the Talons exceptionally difficult.

### *Shadow Lords*

Here's a bit of advice: Never play a chess game with a Shadow Lord Half-Moon. These werewolves are masters of planning and evaluation. They set up plots within plots as easily as an actor blocking a scene. The thing is, most of us don't feel their manipulating paw until whatever they've set up has come to fruition. To be fair, sometimes they've got good reason for all that subtle maneuvering. Still, even a noble goal doesn't make up for the fact that they're generally cunning and secretive. Like the Silver Fangs, the key player of the Shadow Lords, Konietzko, isn't a Philodox, but you can bet he has a lot of Half-Moons lurking near his ear.

### *Silent Striders*

Considering that this tribe is scattered far and wide, you shouldn't be surprised that they don't have a typical sept structure. Strider Galliards may preserve the language, songs and stories of the tribe, but the Half-Moons too help form the nexus of the tribe's communication system. Moreover, like myself, many of them are known for being good itinerant judges — willing to lend an impartial ear to those who ask for it — whether werewolf or spirit. And while I can't say for sure, I imagine more than one Philodox among the tribe is working on some sort of way to reclaim their ancestral homeland, Egypt, especially now that the coalition known as the Ahadi has seriously kicked leech butt there. There's a Strider woman named Bennu that we all may want to watch in the coming days. If anyone can work with Walks-With-Might, the leading Strider in the Ahadi, it's her.

### *Silver Fangs*

Among the self-proclaimed leaders of the Garou Nation, the Fangs give a special place to the Philodox. It's true that Albrecht may be an Ahroun, but he surrounds himself with Half-Moons to give guidance and remind him of the law. And there's a lot of legal stuff to know! The Half-Moon Silver Fang must orate not only Garou law, but tribal law as well — extremely complex stuff. The Silver Fang Philodox is also a teacher and mentor among the tribe, and many can recite history as well as any Moon Dancer. I can see I've shocked you. Well, there's also a downside to so much responsibility, and that's the burden of being a leader among leaders. The expectations are quite high, and more than one Half-Moon of the Silver Fangs has cracked due to the intense mental pressure.

### *Uktena*

Most Half-Moons of this tribe are great mentors and bridge-builders. As Uktena Kin come from many places and backgrounds, it's important to have someone who can keep things connected. That's where the Philodox comes in. The Uktena usually call them "Lawgivers" or "Peacemakers" rather than judges. Many times, as the sept leader mentioned, the Philodox is chief in peace times, but gives over to an Ahroun in days of war, still playing an important role as advisor. Another, less discussed task of the Half-Moon is keeping secrets. The Galliards may have the hidden lore all stored away, but it's the Philodox who often decide when knowledge should be shared and how.

### *Wendigo*

In a tribe steeped so heavily in ancient tradition, a major role of the Half-Moon is preserving the old

ways to pass down from generation to generation. Like the Uktena, the Philodox is most often the leader, except in war, but the Wendigo put a twist on things. They don't assume anything about a Half-Moon until she proves herself worthy. So, the right of leadership isn't inborn; rather, it's earned. One thing you gotta respect about the Wendigo is this: They may not always agree among themselves, but when a Philodox who has won their respect speaks, the tribe listens and obeys, even if they don't understand the purpose and intent of the Half-Moon's words. Let's just hope that someone who's a fool doesn't get the reins of leadership.

## *Training*

Meredith had been listening intently this whole time, but now she interrupted with a question. "I realize you follow the auspice you're born to, but how is the training different from, say, a Galliard? You mentioned that a lot of Half-Moons have to learn history and such. Doesn't that seem like a bit of an unnecessary overlap?"

That's a really interesting question, and honestly, one I'd not thought about too much before now, so I'm glad you raised it. I guess the best way to answer is to talk about what happens during a werewolf's childhood, presuming she's raised by knowing Kin or in a sept proper, rather than left alone to be kidnapped by strangers at some later point, or even forsaken as a lost cub. I hate to say it, but Kin-Fetches don't always work as speedily and sure as they should. But let's go on the assumption that this kid in question has the good fortune to be in a place where she can learn about things from the get-go. The locals know she's going to become a werewolf and also what moon sign arose at her birth. I don't know that much about your upbringing, but this is kind of what it was like for me.

## *Youth*

My own daughter is seven, and I've taken care to introduce her to other members of my sept and their Kinfolk since she was a baby. Her bedtime stories have been those of our great heroes, the ones that are wise sages as well as great warriors. Something we also sneak into those tales is what I call "Litany Lite." Maybe it's just a Philodox thing, but it shouldn't be. Parents and other adults are among the best agents of socialization for children, and I think it's important that both Garou and Kin learn the morals we hold dear. Do I insist she recite the Litany in order or any hogwash like that? No! But I do want her to remember the basics, such as respecting others, being honorable and not treading on someone else's space. So, in theory, she'll always preserve these values we cherish.

## *First Change*

Again, let's imagine that someone's First Change occurs close to other werewolves and Kin she's known from childhood. Boom, there it is. Even if you kind of expect it, you and I both know it's pretty traumatic, painful both physically and spiritually. The joy and wonder come later. One of the first things we try to ascertain is the new werewolf's auspice. If careful records have been kept, we already know the sign under which she was born. If not, the Crescent Moons can speak with certain spirits and find out pretty soon.

Different tribes treat newly changed werewolves in different ways. Some prefer not to waste much time teaching them, since they might up and die in the Rite of Passage. Personally, I don't like the sink or swim approach; at least give them a few lessons on staying afloat before you throw them into the pond! So if a new Philodox comes to me, I want to at least talk about the basics. Sort of like I did with you, right? Some of this is good training for any new changer; I'm talking about discussing the Litany, the various tribes, the auspices, the breeds and so on. But with a Half-Moon, I also want to stress the importance of duty. I may delve a bit into the history of our auspice, how we've been judges, leaders, lawgivers and so on, since the beginning of time. I'll also throw in how she should be an example of balance between human and wolf. That's what generally scares them. Oh, not the human/wolf thing, but rather how the Philodox has to be a model "citizen" as it were. Ever heard that saying, *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* No? Well, it means "who watches the guardians?" In other words, there's no such thing as a werewolf internal affairs department. We Philodox have to more or less police ourselves, be on our best behavior and serve as an example to others, from First Change until death.

## *Rites of Passage*

As you well know from those fresh scars on your flank, you're not really a full-fledged member of the tribe until you complete the Rite of Passage; everyone knows that. What folks may not know is that usually, the Half-Moons of the sept, in consultation with other elders, often decide on the tasks the would-be werewolves must complete. And it's compromise after compromise, particularly if you're talking about a bunch of different tribal notions of what's important. Fianna may want the cubs to bring back some lost piece of song; Uktena no doubt demand a forgotten secret of ancient lore. So, we Philodox try to negotiate a happy medium for the cubs. The tasks can't be so impossible that failure is certain, but they can't be a cakewalk, either. I like the three-pronged approach myself. First, to test the cubs' mettle, I think they need to release

some of that seething Rage and bloody their claws on a piece of the Wyrm. That's why part of your Rite of Passage involved combat. Second, I believe they need to speak with a spirit; after all, that's in part what we are, and what better way to get to know themselves? So I made sure you got to do that, too. Finally, especially for the Philodox, I want them to mediate some sort of dispute. It could be between two Kin, for all I care, but I want them to be in the thick of an argument, pull apart the contenders and sort things out fairly. So the Rite of Passage isn't going to be a short process one can finish in a leisurely afternoon. I don't think it's unusual for weeks to pass."

Meredith gave me a rueful grin. "And that last one was the toughest of the three, without a doubt. I thought I wouldn't get out of that scrap between the metis and the lupus alive!"

Hey, it wasn't supposed to be easy. My bottom line is that if a newly Changed cub is a Half-Moon, then I have to see she's worthy of the auspice. If that's not proven on the Rite of Passage, then I better get some proof real quick. Otherwise, a Rite of Renunciation might be in order. Oh hell, don't look so scared. Only rarely does a cub not live up to the demands of being a Half-Moon. I'd say that in all my days, I've only seen it happen about three times. But it's a lot better to do this quick, rather than have an ill-made Philodox serving our people. And you did just fine, Heart of the Sky.

### Serving the Tribe

When the Half-Moon completes the Rite of Passage, her learning isn't finished, as you're just starting to find out. Not by a long shot. She likely trains side by side with a Philodox of higher rank, perfecting her knowledge of Garou laws and customs, to correctly interpret these matters for the tribe. Also, she learns what it means to be a leader. I'm not just talking about being at the head of the fray in battle, but also how to make hard decisions, the ones that gnaw at your very soul. One of the most difficult things we teach the Half-Moons who eventually lead our packs and septs is that death is part of life. It may rip your heart out to order a beloved friend into certain death, but if it's for the good of our people, it has to be done. Act now, mourn later; that's a common saying among us. We can't show any partiality; we have to be fair in all things, no matter the pain we may feel.

Another part of serving the tribe involves having good judgment. I'm not talking about being a judge *per se*, but rather, knowing when to give and take, when to push and when to let go. It's not something that can be taught, really, but comes from years of experience, watching others and not flinching from the tasks at hand.

### Relations with Other Auspices

I looked up as someone rapped on the door. A moment later, a tall, gangly guy with auburn hair walked in with Joan. He nodded to us and helped himself to a beer from the small icebox. Ah, the Fianna Ahroun, I thought.

He sat down beside me. "Hi, I'm Steven Dale — Banehew. You must be the Black Furies, Elaine and Meredith."

I tilted my head in answer. "Thanks for coming. We just wanted to hear your take on what happened here."

Steven took a long draw on the beer bottle; not much was left except spit when he'd finished. "Look, you seem like a smart lady, so I'm going to tell it to you straight. I don't know anything about what's going on. It's not that I have anything against Gerhard personally, but facts are facts, and they point to his guilt. Worse, he tried to frame Denise, and that really makes me pissed."

"Whoa, whoa. What do you mean, he tried to frame Denise? Denise, your other packmate? The Crescent Moon? Nobody mentioned this before." I gritted my teeth.

The Ahroun shrugged. "Guess it got sort of shuffled aside. Yeah, on the night we found Nancy's fetish in Gerhard's house, we also found some of Nancy's things at Denise's place. Not much, just some clothes and a few pieces of jewelry."

I glared at Joan. "Nobody told me this."

"Well, I'm telling you now," Steven retorted. "What's more, Denise saw Nancy and Gerhard arguing about something, not too long before we found her body. Oh, in case no one mentioned it, it was Denise and I who went looking for her and found her gutted. Gerhard was furious and started trying to figure out what had happened. We looked everywhere for clues, and that's when the stuff showed up at Denise's. It looked bad for her there for a minute, but then I found the fetish that Gerhard had stashed, and Denise remembered him arguing with Nancy. Calvin stepped in and took over. The rest I presume you know." He snapped his fist into the palm of his other hand. "Really pisses me off, too. Denise is damn smart. To set her up... shit, I'd kill him myself if the Uktena would allow it."

"But Gerhard told the truth. He didn't kill Nancy," I objected.

Steven shrugged. "Denise explained that sometimes, spirits can be bribed to help conceal the truth. Ghostfire's a Crescent Moon of the Uktena pack, and he said that was true as well. So we figured that somehow Gerhard covered up the truth, made it seem like he was innocent and tried to pin the blame on Denise. That's pretty damn low, even for a Shadow Lord."

"Calvin said the same thing," Joan muttered softly from where she leaned against the far wall. "I remember his words: 'How like one of you to turn against your own.'"

I sighed and rubbed my eyes. This was one of those nights I wish I were a cub again, listening to wisdom at my mentor's knee. I'd never tell Meredith, of course, but how I wish our roles were reversed. "Okay, okay. I think we've already established the fact that this isn't one big happy family of werewolves here. You guys snipe more than most. But that doesn't help figure out how Nancy died, and why."

The Ahroun stared at me for a minute. "You like doing this? Going around to people you hardly know, trying to fix their problems?"

For a minute, I thought he was being a smartass; then, I realized his question was asked out of sincere interest. "Well, yeah, I guess I do. It's what I'm supposed to do. I can't change my nature, Steven."

"Get to meet a lot of different Garou? All auspices, all tribes?"

I nodded. "Yes, that's the interesting part. And while it's not always easy, it's a perpetual learning experience. Take the different roles Luna has established for each of us. As a Philodox, I can see that each is part of the whole; we couldn't have any one without the other."

### Ragabash

A lot of werewolves look down on the New Moons, and not only is it unfair, it's stupid. Ragabash have keen eyes and razor wit. They see things others miss, and in their own way, they're as skilled at peacekeeping as the Philodox. It's easy to confuse "trickster" with "trickery," and that's one reason everybody looks askance at the New Moons. More often than not, they've got a reason for behaving as they do. Occasionally, what a stuffy, stuck-up sept leader needs is someone to help ease down tensions. Here's a little secret for you to gnaw on: Half-Moons use Ragabash unabashedly. When we feel the need for a bit of contrariness or a new perspective, we'll drag in a New Moon and set them to work. It's effective, subtle and wholly in keeping with why Luna and Gaia gave us the Ragabash in the first place. Sometimes, of course, it spills over into the territory of directly opposing one another. If the Ragabash is constantly harping on "The Law is outdated and wrong," we have to keep reminding them that "Not only is the Law right and there for a reason, we must remember the spirit in which it was made" while also trying to keep what they are trying to tell us in perspective. Make no mistake: A talented Ragabash is an asset and a pain in the ass at the same time.

### Theurge

As many Crescent Moons are ritemasters and our strongest links with the spirit world, we Half Moons rely heavily on their words. Without the Theurge's visions, dreams and understanding of our inner souls, we'd be lost. Any Philodox leader worth spit will have a strong

Theurge by her side. In times of peace, if a Half-Moon can't lead, a Crescent Moon is almost certainly the next best choice. Okay, I know that many times, a Theurge has her head in the stars and has to be brought down to earth a bit, even if that means pulling her away from the spirit world for a few minutes. It's still a small price to pay for the Crescent Moon's guidance and wisdom.

### Galliard

Just as the Theurge helps us interpret matters of the spirit, the Galliards are our backups in affairs of law and history. It's true that every Philodox has to know reams about the Litany and examples of werewolf justice in the past; like humans, we value precedence and the concept of primacy. But that's an enormous amount of material. Galliards are walking reference manuals! The best of them can recall tales, both major and minor, and how past Half-Moons interpreted the law and meted out justice. My recollections are as good as anyone's, but I freely bow to the remembrances of a well-trained Galliard should we have a discrepancy in the matter of distant history. How I choose to interpret the facts is still my job, but it helps to have them all sitting there in the Gibbous Moon's head at any given moment.

### Ahroun

We come full circle now to the best of Gaia's warriors, the Ahroun. When peace fails and war falls, even the Half-Moons look to them for guidance. Their understanding of battle is as instinctive to them as our love of justice is to us, and we must respect that fact and hand over leadership as tradition usually requires. That doesn't mean we fade out of the picture, though. While many Full Moons are in their own right brilliant tacticians, they can often use a second opinion or a different option. Now, whether they choose to heed our counsel or not is their call, but we'd be remiss in our duty if we didn't speak up when we saw flaws or problems in the Ahroun's battle plans. A Full Moon commander will always be a better warrior with a wise Philodox by her side as lieutenant and advisor.

### Spiritual Relations

I'd barely finished my little speech about the Full Moons when the last pack member arrived. Denise tapped lightly, and then came right on in. She was an attractive woman, probably in her late 20s, with pale blonde hair, blue eyes and a scattering of freckles. I saw worry and stress in her face as she gave her packmate and fellow Child of Gaia Joan a quick hug. I shook her hand as she sat down on the floor.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Elaine, this is Meredith, and you must be Denise Preston, the Crescent Moon."

She nodded. "Thanks for coming here. I didn't know until just a short while ago that you'd arrived." She stole a

glance at Joan. "Nobody told me you were coming. I usually get up at dawn to visit the caern."

Was it that late already? Or early, as the case may be? Sure enough, rose light filtered through the window. I felt a wave of weariness hit me, but shrugged it off. I imagined my companion must be even more tired, not exactly used to these long hours. "We got in last night, shortly after sunset. I've talked to everyone in your pack, save you. What's your spin on things? Why did Gerhard kill Nancy? Have any spirits spoken to you about exactly what happened?"

Denise wound a finger in her hair as she spoke. "The only reason I can possibly imagine is that Nancy wanted to be sept leader, just like the Shadow Lord, and he didn't want another rival. The Uktena was enough of a challenge to deal with. Anyway, I think he killed her, stole her stuff and planted some of her belongings in my cabin to make me look guilty. Bastard. When we found the feather fetish, that changed everything. Who else but a Shadow Lord would kill his own packmate and make another take the fall?"

"But surely your sept leader, Calvin, called upon the wisdom of Falcon and asked Gerhard to tell the truth? That's what Gerhard told me, anyway. And when he said he didn't kill Nancy, he was being honest," I countered.

"Good grief, he's a damn Shadow Lord! He probably has a hundred different ways of corrupting the truth so it hides a lie!" Denise retorted. "I mean, he probably has more ways to fool spirits into covering his tracks than a Crescent Moon!" Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Steven nodding eagerly, his eyes shining as he looked at the Theurge.

I opened my mouth to respond, then thought better of it. It wasn't so much what she said as how she said it. I recalled another one of Daphne's favorite Latin sayings: *Alitur vitium vivitque tegendo*, "The taint is nourished and lives by being concealed." Sometimes her lawyerlike witticisms were painfully apt.

"Tell me how he might have done it," I said quietly. "As a Theurge, you surely have more experience than I in such matters." She nodded and spoke eagerly.

I can't really talk much about spirit dealings without first mentioning Luna and how essential she is to all werewolves. The Celestine of the Moon, Luna's light burns cool and clear into our hearts. It is her brightness that creates one of the essential thirds of our being, the auspice. We are, as you know, creatures of flesh and spirit; what makes us unique is how we reflect Luna; whether we are born human, wolf or metis; and which tribal totem we follow. These things are balanced, or at least they should be.

Now, as to how we deal with spirits, beyond the basic concepts of chimirage... that depends so much on auspice. For me, speaking with the creatures of the otherworld is as natural as breathing. True, I have learned a way to

change my words into a language they can understand, and that ability was acquired, not inborn. But we Crescent Moons have an inherent knack for it.

I interrupted. "What about a Philodox, such as Gerhard or even Meredith and me? We don't have that innate talent you speak of, so how can we get spirits to help us?"

Spirits are what they are. I don't mean to sound cryptic, but sometimes you Half-Moons have a sharp eye for seeing the bare essence of something. Spirits rather appreciate that because they revel in showing off their fundamental natures. We understand that and never ask them to be something they're not when we ask for their help. You too seem to have some of that ability. Some spirits also appreciate your love of balance and equilibrium, especially those associated with the Weaver.

As far as the Shadow Lord Philodox, well, he probably didn't have to work too hard. I imagine he found it quite easy to coerce one of Grandfather Thunder's brood to help, or possibly even Fog or some other spirit that likes concealment and camouflage. He probably cut a bargain that involved furthering the spirit's desire for secrets and such. Typical!

I sighed and nodded. I saw how it had been done, even if I wasn't a Theurge. "Thank you, Denise, for sharing your ideas. I... don't know what to do just yet. I have another two days, and I'd like to rest and think on things for a bit."

She shrugged and nodded, falling into chitchat with her packmates while I closed my eyes and ran things over and over in my head. Seeing that I was catching some sleep, Meredith curled up on the closest rug and was snoring within minutes. I tossed and turned for a while, unable to clear from my mind the images of blood and death that were piling up by the thousands, it seemed.

### Kinfolk

I didn't remember falling asleep, but I woke up to the clatter of a pan coming out of the small convection oven... and the smell of yeast bread. Sleep's fuzziness melted away as I recalled where I was and what I was doing. Sometime during the day, I'd curled up on the floor and been covered by a blanket — Meredith's doing, no doubt. Looking outside, I saw the sun setting, and realized I'd slept a long time. Well, at least my head would be cleared.

A woman I didn't recognize was cutting bread while Meredith smeared it with honey butter. They'd also laid out rare pieces of meat on the table — looked like venison or beef. I gave them a quick nod, and both smiled in return.

"Joan had to go attend to some sept business, but we'd be poor hosts if we didn't share our table. Come eat. I'm Hadley, one of the Kin cousins. Gerhard's dead uncle's wife, if you want details."

I didn't need to think twice. I devoured most of the meat, with some bread in between, then sat back and sipped on the coffee. Meredith also dived in.

"Your husband died in the dust-up with Spirals?" I inquired, between swallows.

Hadley's face clouded. "Yes, I miss him greatly. It's too soon for me to think about remarrying, though I know my nephew and everyone else would like it." I bit my tongue and managed not to disparage her tribe's notions about marriage, duty and such. I had other kettles to stir. And she seemed like a nice lady.

"Was your husband a Half-Moon like Gerhard?" I asked after a comfortable silence had passed.

"No, he was a Ragabash, but people respected him. The sept leader counted him among the best advisors on his council. My mother, she was a Galliard. Maybe I get some of her ways because I like the old tales. People are surprised that here in the western part of the state, there's more than a few descendants of East Europeans. I know the Scots and the Irish are the majority, but we're here, too."

I nodded. "I don't think that Kin really have some sort of auspice, not 'officially,' but speaking anecdotally, I tend to see Luna's influences among our human and wolf relatives more often than not. Like you, some have an inborn gift for storytelling and songs. Others tend to have the quirky sense of humor you might see in a New Moon. Maybe it's more subtle, but it's there." Meredith kept eating, but I could feel her listening intently. Good girl, I thought, you're learning. It's our task to keep track of Kin as well, even those not our own. We have to know the bloodlines, remember who's mated to whom, know who's been told of the Ways and who hasn't. And we have to know which Kin hold more love for us than fear.

Hadley poured herself another cup, and thought on what I'd said. "I agree. After all, even if we're not ourselves Garou, we were still chosen, right?"

I inclined my head. "Nice to see Kinfolk realize that." I pushed myself away from the table. "Thanks for the snack. We've got a final bit of business to attend." Meredith put our dishes in the sink and followed me outside.

I closed the door behind us, then felt the cool of the night air touch my face. I'd pretty much come to the conclusions I needed to make, but maybe some time on four legs would help me face my next task with more surety than I now felt. I glanced at my student. Oh, what a hard lesson this was to learn so soon, I thought bitterly.

### *Human and Wolf*

I went in search of the lupus elder I'd met the day before — Nightsong, that was her name — with Meredith on my heels. Nightsong was Fianna, but that was fine. Their males might be a bit stupid, but one of their females had saved my ass not too long after my Rite of Passage. She

fought as fiercely as any Fury, so that was cool in my book. It wasn't another woman's voice I was after, anyway, but the words of one of the four legs.

We found her again guarding the crude hut where Gerhard awaited his punishment. She sensed us coming, I thought, but waited until we approached to call a welcome. I'd been Garou for almost 15 years, but I never tired of the wave of sheer joy that passed through me as we again greeted each other as equals, neck to neck, tongue to tongue. No doubt Nightsong was a bit older; plenty of silver tipped her dark fur. But she received me as one close in station, and showed a friendliness to Meredith, too. I jerked my head, and we walked into the forest, leaving her packmates at guard.

"I thought you would come," she began. "You are Half-Moon, the child of Luna's balance. As is the young one. You know that we ourselves are balanced between wolf and human, so my counsel would be helpful."

"As you say," I replied. "Both human and wolf, both spirit and flesh — that balance is important to me. I have tried to become as much wolf as human, so that my logic does not overpower my instinct; if I were lupus, I would try to learn human-thought to match my wolf-instinct. It's the finest way, I believe, to judge truly — and I think my faith in my wolf half is being rewarded. I have... an instinct.

"I think something very sad happened with the Bloody Tusk pack. I believe they forgot the Litany, the parts about honorable surrender, fair challenge and that sort of thing. Something tells me that some of the pack wouldn't know a good leader if she trotted up and clawed their hindquarters."

Nightsong gave a wry, toothy grin of amusement. "You may be right. Tell me what happened. You have seen it, I think, in your dreams, though you may not remember them."

I sighed. "I can't explain how these ideas come to me; they just do. It's like when we know it's time to give birth — we just know."

And I told her the tale as it has sprouted in my mind.

You and I know that there never is such a thing as a typical werewolf, not from any of the three parts that makes up our being: Our tribe, our auspice and our birth form. And that's the problem at the heart of this story. Too many assumptions were made by everyone involved about what a "mainstream" Shadow Lord must be like, or a stereotypical Child of Gaia. The Uktena played their part, too, by still holding grudges from centuries past. I don't blame them, but it was a helluva time for the whole "Wyrmcomer" prejudice to surface so sharply. Anyway, I digress.

The poor sap in this whole picture is the Ahroun, Steven Dale. He's not a bad guy, but as Luna's full light guides his thinking, he naturally feels he's the strongest, and therefore, the best to lead. In certain times, that's probably true; I'm sure he's indispensable against



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a hive of Black Spirals. But they're not swarming down at the moment, unless I've missed something.

So Steven wanted to be pack leader — but he's an honest sort of guy and would never challenge unless he felt himself worthy. He spilled his guts to one whom anybody would trust: A Child of Gaia Theurge. Denise was the spiritual leader of the pack, right? Why not confide in her? And Gaia knows one of her own Children would never be anything but a peacemaker.

Let's just say for a minute that maybe this Crescent Moon wasn't your typical soother of troubled souls. Maybe she came to this sept originally to serve, but somewhere, somehow, something got a little twisted. She was one of the few survivors when Spirals attacked the sept, along with Gerhard. Watching that carnage, fighting with all her might, that must have been hell to see, even to survive. I don't know her motivations. Maybe something happened to her the night of the attack that fouled up her mind. Maybe she went into some sort of deep, ugly funk and mouthed off to a waiting spirit, one that was eager to sow dissent. I can't say for sure.

What I am almost certain of is that she was possessed, maybe permanently, maybe just for a short while. I'm guessing that whatever took over her body was powerful enough to hide the truth from everyone — including Denise herself. I know that she believed

she was telling the truth, about everything. But it was her hand that slew Nancy. And planted the evidence, first on herself, then on Gerhard. Under the influence of a spirit or not, she did it. I guess we'll never know if she was willing or not. Either way, though, she committed a wrongful act against a packmate. For that, I think the punishment's going to be... harsh.

*The wolf twisted her head in puzzlement. "Why herself? It makes no sense."*

It does only if you take the whole Shadow Lord rep into consideration. It was a snap to pin blame on him — make it seem like Gerhard had set Denise up to be the fall guy, but then the "truth" comes out. Denise gets to play up the righteous indignation, and everyone is royally pissed at the Shadow Lord. Not only did he kill a packmate out of greed, a horrible crime in itself, he tried to make another take the blame. The worst punishment wouldn't be enough to clean up his slate, would it?

In the original picture, Gerhard's dead, and so is Nancy. The pack is reduced to three: Steven, Denise, and Joan. Denise is highest rank, but she defers to Steven. And all is right in the world, supposedly. Steven gets to lead, but Denise is his beta, and he'll do about anything she says since he trusts her implicitly. The sept leader, Curtis, probably doesn't want to look too hard to see what's happening right under his nose. Maybe he

thinks that if the Bloody Tusk pack is reduced, that'll make his position stronger. Maybe he's ashamed, or shit, maybe he has too much on his mind. Heck if I know what his feelings are; he's sure not talking to me.

I fell to silence and looked at the lupus. At my side, I felt Meredith trembling as everything sunk in. It'd been a helluva lot for someone still fired up by the newness of being Garou to hear, but there it was.

Nightsong rose then, trotting into the brush near us. I heard a slight scuffling, and then she returned with something glinting around her neck. It was a mirror, a sort of old-fashioned thing, round and hanging on a thick brass chain.

"I saw some of this tale, but it made no sense to me. I needed one born as a human to help explain why these things happened." She bent her head, and the mirror slipped off. Nightsong closed her eyes and sang a few sharp notes; then, the mirror's surface clouded. I watched with a heavy heart as I saw all that I had described take place in detail on the surface of the glass, like a silent movie. It sickened me to the bone, but I didn't take my eyes from the scenes. The death of the Black Fury Half-Moon. The sly look on the Theurge's face as she set up everything. How or why she'd come to this dishonor wasn't clear; neither the lupus nor I could tell when the spirit entered her form whether it was summoned or came unbidden. But the facts of Nancy's death were there.

"I could not understand what had happened," confided Nightsong. "I needed someone to help me. For all that she suffers the curse of her parentage, the Moon Dancer you call Joan has come to be a friend. I gave her my advice, and that was to call you."

I nodded, feeling a little odd about how things had happened, but resigned to present my evidence and let the sept decide the Crescent Moon's fate. I'd done the dirty work by bringing the truth to the surface; time to let them clean up their own mess.

Meredith and I walked back towards the cabin. A few tears had fallen down her face; maybe she was mad, or possibly frightened. They were dry long before she spoke.

"So that's it? You came here and showed them the truth, and now, you step away?" I sensed confusion, maybe even an odd sense of hurt, in her youthful voice.

"Yes. I lanced the wound that festered, drained off the abscess. Now the ones who lead and mentor this sept must partake of the healing."

"But... but it doesn't seem right! Just to go in, stir up trouble and...." Her voice trailed off as I grabbed her arm and spun her around to face me.

"Get used to it, girl. Do you think I enjoy the fate Gaia has destined for me? The bottom line is what I like or don't like is irrelevant. This is the niche the Mother has made for me to fill. That is all I need to know. Now," I said sternly, "do you want to go sit in the truck while I witness what

comes to pass alone? Or are you going to be Garou, and see your job through by my side?"

A fire burned in her eyes, and my misgivings about bringing her along faded. "No, I'll stay. Whatever you might think about me having too much compassion aside, I swore to be your pupil. I won't quit."

If she ever regretted her decision, I never heard another word about it.

I'd never seen the Rite of the Hunt, and I hope I never have to witness it again. Nightsong and I shared our findings with Curtis, and to my surprise, he seemed sad and old, but more trusting than I'd believed possible. The Theurge had remembered nothing of what really happened, and only through one of Gaia's blessings was the sept leader able to see the truth behind her confusion and lies. Whatever had possessed her, willingly or not, had done the deeds, leaving behind the shell of the Crescent Moon to undergo the punishment. I sensed the Uktena's shame and grief, and I felt badly I'd spoken ill of him to my student.

When their Ritemaster, a metis named Ghostfire, came to me with a pottery jar full of paint, I accepted it with a heavy heart. This was an honor I really didn't want, but wouldn't dream of refusing. The mixture smelled of nature: ground clay, madder and henna. I drew the mark of Pegasus on my bare shoulder, surprised to find Meredith offering to hold the jar as I painted, outlining the scars on my thigh and belly, the rips of a warrior, the wrinkled flesh of a mother who has carried a child. I saw with some surprise that Joan also was painting herself; she stood waiting in Crinos, her white eye glinting in the gibbous moon. Nearby, Nightsong already wore bright yellow stains, markings in elaborate curls and spirals. The rest of the Bloody Tusk pack, Steven and Gerhard, wouldn't participate; they stood silently in the shadows. Now, we only had to wait for the Hunt to be formally called.

The Master of the Howl was one of the Uktena I'd not met, a Galliard woman calling herself Olutsa. She cried a long, mournful howl as the moot began. Then, Curtis spoke.

"Dreams of Morning, called Denise Preston among the humans, you have been found guilty of murdering your packmate for a cause of greed and unhappiness. You have admitted fault, by allowing yourself to be manipulated by deceit and trickery. Yet, in your admission and acceptance of the misdeed, you maintain a thread of honor. For this reason, the council has deemed that you shall not die without a chance to earn our respect in your passing."

She bowed her head, accepting her fate in silence. Olutsa barked out a sharp growl, and then, the condemned Child of Gaia ran. Her form grew to that of a dire wolf as she loped through the brush and into the fields of the bawn. Ghostfire shrieked a bloodcurdling cry, and the Hunt began. I don't know how many hours passed, for the Child of Gaia ran until her heart must've nearly burst. Still, it was

over before dawn. I have her blood on my hands, but the killing stroke, I was surprised to see, went to her gentle packmate, Joan. Anyone who says a Child of Gaia can't be ferocious is stupid; I'm not sure if I've seen a raging Fury strike with as much anger and anguish. After the Crescent Moon fell dead, Olutsa began the Rite for the Departed. It was brief, but sincere. The sept scattered as the sun rose, and we two Furies returned to where we'd left my truck. I wanted to go home, to hear my daughter's laughter, to embrace my packmates, to end the screaming of a werewolf's death I heard in my head. Meredith said next to nothing, but there was a more haunted look in her eye this day.

I wasn't surprised to see Joan and Nightsong waiting to see us off. We exchanged no words, just touches of farewell. Damn, I'd hoped I'd feel better. Integrity had been served. By our laws, we'd done what was right. But that wouldn't stop the nightmares I knew would come in the next few weeks. Sometimes, even judges don't sleep the sleep of the just.

## *Judge and Fury: Storyteller Perspectives*

Playing a Philodox is a pretty large responsibility; after all, many of the other auspices will look to the Half-Moon for leadership, advice and guidance. Sometimes it can be hard for the player to live up to the demands of the character. Here, we'll provide some tips for Storytellers to give players a little help along the way.

### *Trusty Stakeholder*

First of all, while Half-Moons often do hold roles as pack and sept leaders, there's no law saying they have to do so. Let's say that the player is more comfortable in a secondary advisory role. He can still be indispensable, even if someone else (like a Storyteller character) has ultimate veto power. Later on, as the player gets used to the demands of leadership, he could move up in rank and station. Think about any young hero from film or fiction; many started out as apprentices or subordinates, developing close relationships with their mentors. After they got some real-life experience under their belts, they were ready for more challenging roles and tasks. In any case, you probably don't want to put too much pressure on the player to play an extraordinary leader right from the start; let them get a feel for things before throwing too much on their plate.

### *The Lone Philodox*

Perhaps more than any other auspice, the Half-Moon presents an interesting opportunity for solo games. While the heart of Werewolf is the chronicle centered around the pack and sept life, sending the lone Philodox on a mission of justice and mercy can provide a nice break from the usual multiplayer furor

and allow some intense character development for the soloist. (You'll have to give the other player characters their time in the spotlight, too, of course).

### *The Half-Moon Pack*

What about a chronicle where everyone plays a Philodox? Maybe this multi-tribe pack serves as special counselors to a larger-than-life leader, such as Albrecht or Konietzko. Their responsibilities are many, from seeking out information to visiting other septs, cutting deals and keeping in touch with Kinfolk. Of course, they'll have to work closely with other auspices. As the Apocalypse approaches, maybe their tasks will include contacting certain Fera or questing packs. This is a chance to show how different tribes put their own spins on the Half-Moon's role.

### *Handling the Rite of Renunciation*

Storytellers and players already know that renouncing a character's given auspice is a serious thing indeed, but if a compelling reason exists, it can be done. What Storytellers should remember is that a veneer of distrust and suspicion will forever be on the character. Maybe she'll not encounter any overt criticism or odd looks, but she'll surely hear whispers behind her back and occasionally outright scorn and cynicism, particularly from members of her old auspice. Likewise, dealings with Luna and her brood should become markedly more difficult.

In rejecting the role of Philodox, a character is saying she can't live up to the high expectations of leadership, decision-making and interpretation of laws and customs. For a group of beings that so revere tradition, this is an especially bitter affront. Some werewolves might take this as a sign of rejecting the essence of what it means to be Garou. They'll also consider the former Half-Moon as a creature out of balance—something "just ain't quite right" about her. Storytellers should certainly feel free to explore the many themes behind this change in the character's path, both the novelty of the new auspice and the bitter seeds from rejection of the old.

### *Archetypes*

Archetypes both reflect stereotypes and defy them; they can show the "basics" of how to play an auspice as well as put a new spin on an old idea. The following archetypes should give players and Storytellers a few ideas on how to work the Half-Moon creatively into the frame of the chronicle.

### *The Inquisitor*

In maintaining law and justice, the Philodox has to ask hard and sometimes painful questions. The Inquisitor excels at this exercise, to the point of near fanaticism.

While her intentions are usually good, her technique is razor-sharp. Not everyone appreciates her drive and ambition, nor her passion for figurative (and sometimes, literal) bloodletting. The Inquisitor is a real take-charge type who barges in, kicks ass and carves names into her little black book with gusto. When sitting in judgment of her fellow werewolves, she's the one who pushes the envelope — not afraid of anything or anyone.

The problem with the Inquisitor is that she is heedless of any consequences. Even if there's a slightly easier path to reach the truth, that leaves another's honor intact but still accomplishes the job, she'll always take the harder road. For this reason, most werewolves fear rather than respect her. They'd follow her if so ordered, but out of dread of her reprisals, not loyalty. The Inquisitor means well; she's just got to learn to soften her blows on occasion. Nobody wants to see her show throat needlessly, but by the same token, she should learn how to accept her losses gracefully.

The Inquisitor of the waning moon tends to see everything in dualities: Yes and no, good and bad, right and wrong. There's no middle ground whatsoever. When born under the waxing moon, the Inquisitor seems to revel in the fear she evokes in others. She's like an old, crusty teacher who has no mercy on anyone for any reason. She's not really such an absolutist, but she does enjoy the reputation.

### *The Perfectionist*

The Perfectionist is fairly high-strung and nervous. He believes that everything has a place under the sun, and whatever's not in the proper place needs to scurry there as soon as possible, lest he get too pissed. The Perfectionist is the fellow who scours the bawn again, and again and again, driving the Theurges mad with his fidgeting. He's in high demand as an organizer of sept gatherings and moots, though; when the Perfectionist is in charge, others can be assured of all things going smoothly.

In evolving into a wiser Half-Moon, the Perfectionist needs to learn to slow down and relax a bit. He can work well with others (it's in his nature, after all), but he also needs to get better at taking advice and input from his packmates seriously, not just giving lip service and then doing it his way irregardless. In short, he's got to start seeing the forest and the trees, not just the leaves, roots and branches.

The waning moon Perfectionist specializes in details. He looks at minutiae to the detriment of the big picture. Granted, those small parts of the whole are going to be incredible, but in the end, because he doesn't always step back with an objective eye, he may miss some bigger points. The Perfectionist of the waxing moon is just plain bossy; he's a bit of a know-it-all who may have a somewhat elevated opinion of his abilities.

### *The Unready Leader*

Born beneath the half moon, this werewolf is destined to be a leader... and yet, he fears the challenge that awaits. He may not want the reins of command, but by fate or heredity, they've fallen into his lap. The Unready Leader has good qualifications, but he's full of self-doubt. Every time he makes a decision, he's afraid it's the wrong one. Moreover, he blames himself for the pack's failures, and never takes credit for their successes.

The Unready Leader has a bit of a martyr complex, but he internalizes it rather than complaining about his lot in life. Most of his packmates probably don't realize that the silence they take for quiet wisdom is really concealing worry and misgivings about the future. The Unready Leader needs to gain confidence, and this will only come from repeated success, the passage of time and the firm support of his pack.

The Unready Leader born under the waxing moon may seem detached, perhaps even unfriendly. His detractors call him cold and unfeeling, while his friends, despite their affection for him, think he's too preoccupied inside his own head. If born under the waning moon, the Unready Leader seems constantly on edge, checking and rechecking every preparation a dozen times or more. He's pessimistic and believes that something will go wrong unless he's right there to fix it.

### *The Itinerant Adjudicator*

While the Inquisitor peels back the layers of lies to find the truth, leaving plenty of scars in the process, the Itinerant Adjudicator rather is a mender of old wounds. She moves from sept to sept, invited in most cases, and applies a soothing balm of healing wherever it's needed. The Adjudicator usually keeps her cards close to the heart until it's time to speak publicly, but she's willing to talk to anyone and everyone to make things right... wherever that path may lead.

Unfortunately, the Itinerant Adjudicator sometimes stumbles into trouble because of her Pollyanna outlook. She believes that all disputes can be resolved in a fair and reasonable manner, whether through mediated discussion or an even-handed fight. Moreover, she believes in the inherent prevalence of justice among the werewolves, an outlook that often clashes with strong tempers and tough personalities. In becoming a better moderator, the Adjudicator would do well to occasionally set aside the rose-colored spectacles and deal with the shades of gray in a slightly more cynical manner.

The waxing-moon Adjudicator in particular has difficulties peering beneath the surface of things. She's usually content to hear all sides of the story, give her judgment and go about her merry way, not realizing the chaos she

may have left behind. The waning-moon Adjudicator, on the other hand, may overstay her welcome and delve into matters way beyond the scope of her goodwill.

## *Gifts*

• **Moon Lore (Level One)**— Using this Gift, the werewolf can learn the phase of the moon that heralded the birth of another. Although it can determine auspice, Moon Lore gives no clue to whether the subject is a werewolf or even if it is supernatural in any way; being born under a waxing gibbous moon means much more to a Garou than it does to a normal human. Any moon-spirit can teach this Gift.

**System:** A single success on a Perception + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 6) is required to determine the moon's phase at the time of the subject's birth; two successes determine whether it was waxing or waning.

• **Omen of Truth (Level Two)**— Half Moons are seldom called upon to make easy decisions or clear-cut judgments – if things were so simple, the Philodox would not be needed. Yet when it comes down to it, even the judge could use a hint now and then. By taking a moment to look around, the wise Garou may see in the fall of a leaf or path of a butterfly an answer he seeks.

**System:** The player spends a Gnosis point and makes a Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty varies, from 9 in a featureless, sealed space to 5 for a forest at sunset). The Gift takes a minimum of one full minute to use; the user gains a -1 difficulty if he dwells on the problem for half an hour. Successes add to the nature and certainty of the omen, while a botch brings an equally certain but erroneous conclusion. More than most, the effects of this Gift are up to the Storyteller, and depend on the situation; in general, though, the Storyteller should use it to give a hint as to Gaia's two cents worth on the matter in question.

• **Divided Heart (Level Three)**— The heart of the werewolf is filled with rage, and quite often, this internal fire can overcome a werewolf's strength of will. With this Gift, taught by any tree spirit, a Philodox can briefly allow another to "hold back" the fury inside, lest a poorly made decision cause irreparable damage.

**System:** The purpose of this Gift is to help alleviate the difficulties a werewolf encounters when his Rage exceeds his Willpower (*Werewolf*, p. 126). For every success on a Manipulation + Primal Urge roll by the Philodox player, one penalty die is negated for the target character. The effects last for five minutes per success — a Philodox can temporarily alleviate the Curse, but never negate it.

• **Reality's Path (Level Four)**— Perception is subjective, but the Philodox cannot afford that luxury.

This Gift allows the user to sense whether what the subject *believes* to be true is actually false. A Jagglings of Falcon teaches the Gift.

**System:** The player rolls Perception + Enigmas (difficulty 7). A single success determines if what the subject is telling an unintended untruth. Three successes will discover if the subject was deliberately misled. Five successes or more will reveal the truth of the lie at its simplest level (it might tell who perpetrated a crime, but not why or who the perp was working for). Note that this Gift only works when a subject speaks what he truly believes; packmates can't go on "fishing expeditions" by throwing out names to determine who really committed a deed, for example.

Reality's Path deals with knowable facts ("She never intended to return", "despite his boast, your brother didn't kill the Bane single-handed"), not greater spiritual truths.

• **Soul's Guilt (Level Five)**— This powerful but very temperamental Gift allows the weight of guilt which rests on the heart to emerge to the surface. The effect varies but usually appears as shadowing across the subject's features; the shadows deepen as the guilt grows (other effects include "howls of demons," the sound of winter winds or even ominous background music). Note that, while useful, it has some severe limitations, for it registers only what troubles the individual. To a saintly old lady, a white lie may give her nightmares and deeply shade her soul, while a vigilante may sleep the sleep of the just and go undetected by this Gift. Soul's Guilt is taught by one of Falcon's brood, or any spirit associated with Justice.

**System:** The Garou must look at (or in some cases, listen to or smell) the target and concentrate for one full turn. The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty of 7); number of successes indicate the clarity of the Garou's impression.

• **Release from Bondage (Level Six)**— There are many ways to mystically bend the will of another. This Gift shatters all such bonds, from the blood domination of a vampire to a mage's mind control or a Half Moon's geas. Those who know this Gift may use it on any being, including themselves. This Gift is only granted by an Incarna or equally powerful spirit, usually as a reward for some great service.

**System:** The Garou is automatically immune to any supernatural coercion save from any being more powerful than an Incarna. The Gifted one may break another's mystic compulsion by touching her, spending a Gnosis point and rolling Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty 11 - the target's Willpower).

## *New Rites*

### *Rite of Punishment*

### *The Rite of Silver Death*

Level Four

Only the Rite of Gaia's Vengeful Teeth is a worse punishment than the Rite of Silver Death. The werewolves reserve it for those who kill their own kind without provocation or lawful challenge but rather through cold, calculated murder in order to achieve some aim or goal. For example, a werewolf who kills another to steal a fetish or ascend to power would be a likely candidate to suffer this punishment... if he could be proven guilty. A lesser crime might warrant a Hunt, where the offender may at least redeem herself by dying well; but in the Silver Death there is no redemption, only further shame and humiliation. Before the assembled werewolves (at least two others) and spirits, the ritemaster recites the crime(s) of the offender. As he does so, all strength drains from the offender's body, so that she may do nothing but cower as one of the Garou (usually the ritemaster, sometimes the murdered one's packmate or Kin) raises the klawie for the deathblow.

**System:** A Charisma + Rituals roll (difficulty 7) is all that is necessary to rob the offender of all strength. The doomed one cannot step sideways or move from her spot. A Willpower roll (difficulty is 4 + ritemaster's

successes) is necessary to stand bravely at the end; a failure costs 1 temporary Glory and 2 temporary Honor, while a botch costs twice as much (as the doomed one broke at the end and groveled most pathetically).

### *Rites of Accord*

### *The Rite of the Pack's Blood*

Level One

Most Garou form packs that are bound with and dedicated to a totem spirit. In these days of mixed septs and thinning ranks, some werewolves are forced by necessity to run together temporarily. This ritual binds a group of werewolves into a pack dedicated to a particular purpose, such as a quest, a battle or a fortnight's stint of bawn-guarding. The effects of this expire after the task is done, or after a lunar month, whichever comes first. Elders usually expect more permanent associations to ask for the blessings of a totem spirit.

Though the supernatural benefits of this rite eventually end, mutual respect and friendships are a common byproduct. Rival septs may join their warriors with this rite to improve relations. It is not uncommon for such packs to reform into "true" packs down the road, devoted to a specific and appropriate totem spirit.

**System:** The members of the prospective pack each swear their united purpose as they slice a palm or pad and dribble a small amount of blood into a cup. The blood is mixed and painted on face, hand and



chest (over the heart) of each member. Upon a successful completion of the ritual (Charisma + Rituals, difficulty 7), the pack may take on benefits such as simultaneous initiative and special combat maneuvers. Note that packmembers already in a "true" pack may join this temporary pack, but will likely have some explaining to do to a miffed totem.

### *Rite of the Great Council*

Level Four

In these days when unity is so important, it is often sorely lacking. Too often, a rift pits pack against pack, tribe against tribe, or sept against sept. A popular Garou may be (possibly wrongly) accused and sentenced, or old resentments flare into open warfare. Despite the Half Moons' best efforts, the fabric of werewolf society is torn asunder. This risky but impressive ritual draws together the most powerful spirits involved in the contention — usually the totems of contending packs, although caern or tribal totems may also be involved. It is a perilous venture, but success will almost certainly bring peace; when the most powerful spirits of a sept speak with one voice, even warring packs will take notice.

**System:** The target number for the Charisma + Rituals roll is equal to the highest spirit type summoned (as per Rite of Summoning, page 161 of the core book). What follows should make for some intense roleplaying (although the Storyteller may adjust the totems' initial attitude by the number of successes rolled). Once all the spirits are in attendance, the Philodox must lay out the situation and/or plead the case. The spirits give council to, or perhaps interrogate, the Half Moon. If they agree with his decisions, they will stand behind him as he makes (or reiterates) the judgment. If on the other hand they disagree with the arbiter's decision, that too will be made abundantly clear (usually resulting in a loss of Honor Renown and credibility).

### *Mystic Rites*

#### *The Rite of the Blackened Moon*

Level Three

This rarely used rite creates a spiritually dead zone, essentially closing off a small space to Umbral access. The space can be no larger than a small hut or large room. Garou feel distinctly uncomfortable in this dead zone, and spirits trapped there can wither away to nothingness.

**System:** The bounds of the space are inscribed with glyphs, and an herbal smudge or incense is burned to banish spirits and spiritual influences from the room. Each success (Wits + Rituals, difficulty 7) increases the Gauntlet by one, to a maximum of 10. In addition, no Gnosis can be regained in any way within the warded space, and materialized spirits trapped within begin to unravel at the rate of 1 Essence/hour. The ritual's effect lasts a number of days equal to the ritemaster's successes, fading at sundown of the final day. This takes half an hour to perform, and can be continued as often as necessary.

### *New Fetishes*

#### *Feather of Ma'at*

Level 3, Gnosis 5

Originally a creation of the Silent Striders, the Striders have been known to share this fetish with Half-Moons of other tribes who've been a great aid to Owl's children. The feather can be of various forms, from an ostrich plume to a raven's quill. When a Philodox is speaking to someone, she "applies" the feather against the truth of their speech by tossing it into the air. If the feather sinks to the earth, it "weighs" more than the words of the person speaking; they are being truthful. However, if the speaker is lying, the feather remains floating; their words are too "heavy." Should the werewolf using the feather fail to activate it, the default is that the feather falls to the ground... and she may not realize she's hearing lies.

### *Storyglass*

Level 4, Gnosis 6

A storyglass can be an ordinary pocket mirror, shard of glass or other reflective surface (as long as it's not silver!) When activated, the user speaks a specific question to the glass, such as "Show me who stole my klawie." A brief, silent image will appear. Such flashes can be misleading, as they don't often give a complete picture of what occurred and why. The images also reflect "visible" reality; if someone is wearing a disguise, that's what the viewer sees, not the person under the mask. Images in a storyglass aren't hard and fast evidence for moots or rites of punishment, but they can point a Philodox in a useful direction.



PETER GREENLEAF

# Chapter Four: Old Stories and New Songs

"You are, in effect, dropping stones down a well. Every time you hear an echo from your Subconscious, you know yourself a little better. A small echo may start an idea. A big echo may result in a story."

— Ray Bradbury, "How to Keep and Feed a Muse"

One thing for this sept — they treat you right. Their security ain't bad for a bunch of peaceniks, either. They knew I was coming before I got within three miles of the bawn, and as soon as I crossed, I had a big burly Guardian all up in my face, but smiling. "You gonna speak until sunrise?" They always ask me that. Yeah, I think maybe I will.

The sept is mostly Child of Gaia, though I'm guessing the Rite-Mistress is Uktena, judging from her coloring and her garb. That's good, because after the political bullshit and the other assorted headaches I endured at the last sept I visited, not to mention the fact that I just did a long stretch in the Holy Land, which is most assuredly too hot for comfort right now, it's nice to be in some friendly territory.

So when the Shadow Lord sits down across from me at the picnic table, my stomach clenches a bit. He's so obviously a Lord — dark hair, sneaky smile, pretty clear ancestry from the "nobility" of the tribe. But what's he want with me?

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He walks into the clearing and heads for a picnic table, and my heart starts pounding. Now's my chance. If half of the rumors I've heard about him are true, he's been around the world and back and he's probably seen things that I can

only imagine. Now, I'm no slouch myself, but this is Samir the Jackal, for Gaia's sake!

I dust myself off and walk over. These hippie septs annoy the hell out of me — never anyplace to freshen up, unless you feel like an hour hike to a park restroom, which aren't very clean anyway. I'm scuffed from the trip and the jeep ride out here, but he looks even more disheveled than I do, so it's all good.

This guy's got some stories I can use, I'm sure. And hey, maybe I can tell him some stuff, too? I sit down across from him and look him over. He really does look wiped out, but I understand he's been overseas and just got back into the country. He's drinking a big glass of that naturally flavored crap the Children here like to serve their guests (I bring my own water for exactly that reason). He's a lot younger than I thought, but then, I'm pretty young to have done as much as I have, too. I wonder how I should introduce myself. We're not at a moot, and neither one of us is really in the superior position, since we're both visitors. I think he outranks me, but I've heard conflicting reports about that. Finally, I just decide to downplay the whole Garou thing and talk to him like a person. He should be able to get behind that.

I extend a hand. "Hey, how are you? I'm Malcolm."

• • •

Samir took the younger man's hand and shook it carefully. "Malcolm what?"

Malcolm blinked. "Ummm... Malcolm Weathers?" Samir didn't blink or release his grip. "Malcolm Night-Smile, if that's what you want to know."

Samir let go and took another drink. "That's a start. What's the rest?"

"Christ, aren't we formal." Malcolm drew himself up straight and looked Samir in eye. "Malcolm Night-Smile, a Galliard of Shadow Lords and Adren. And you?"

The other werewolf paused, then smirked into his cup. "None of your business." Malcolm cocked an eyebrow. He looked confused, as though he'd been expecting something quite different out of this conversation. Finally, he sat down and took a bottle of water from his satchel.

"You are Samir the Jackal, right?"

Samir tried not to smile, but it didn't work. "Yeah."

"The Galliard Who Speaks 'Til Sunrise?"

"Yeah."

Malcolm nodded. "Oh, OK." They sat for several minutes, silently, Malcolm stealing glances at Samir periodically. Finally, the Silent Strider stood up and stretched.

"Well, you really know how to keep the party jumping, but I'm going to look around for some food." He nodded to Malcolm, and walked off in the direction of the lodge.

Malcolm stood up and followed, his normally cocky demeanor curdling a bit. "Wait just a damn minute. You didn't say anything either. At least I introduced myself."

Samir turned. "Yeah, true. So now I know your name. And if you hang around until the moot tonight, you'll really hear something."

Malcolm smiled and ground his teeth. "Actually, the elders asked me to act as Talesinger tonight, in recognition of my services to this sept."

"What services would those be?"

"Guess you'll find out tonight." The Shadow Lord turned on his heel and sauntered away. Samir fought the urge to pounce — that wouldn't look good — but called after him.

"Well, in some septs that honor goes to the best storyteller, rather than to the richest."

A pair of young Garou training nearby almost dropped their weapons. The very forest around them seemed to go dead quiet. Malcolm stopped as if struck, and his entire body tensed. He did not, however, turn to face Samir. "I beg your pardon?"

Samir simply smirked. "You heard me."

Malcolm turned. "You want to talk about what it means to be a storyteller? Suits me. Let's find the Master of the Challenge. I'd like her to hear this. I don't want you

'forgetting' what was said later." He stormed by Samir into the forest.

"Isn't your nickname 'Malcolm the Liar'?" Samir asked as he followed.

Werewolves born under the gibbous moon have a complex and often underestimated position within Garou society. They are storytellers, yes, but to a culture based so heavily in oral tradition, that role is absolutely vital. The Galliard must not only tell the stories, but also learn and remember them as well. That requires learning a great many of the lessons taught to the other auspices — for a Galliard to describe a memorable fight scene, she must know how to fight. For a Moon Dancer to simulate the strange conversational foibles of a spirit, it helps if she knows how spirits talk. And it goes without saying that to properly convey the tragedy of a love-story about two Garou, the Galliard must know the Litany.

For a Werewolf player, the role of Galliard can be a tricky one to fill without falling into a "merry bard" archetype (not that there's anything wrong with that, of course). However, the gibbous moon produces Garou of infinite depth and possibility, and in this chapter, we'll show you as much of that as possible.

## *Under the Gibbous Moon*

The Master of the Challenge sat serenely under a tree and sipped her drink. The sun was setting, but the day was still hot, and both Galliards glowered at each other, trying to mask rivalry as good-natured competitiveness. Lucy Asks-Twice, the mediator, sat up and stretched. "OK, so what's the deal here? You both think you're the perfect Galliard?"

"Well, by no means—" began Samir.

"—perfect," Malcolm finished. They exchanged a look, and the Shadow Lord continued. "I just think that given my rather unique experiences, I think I have a better bead on what we as Galliards should be doing in the world."

"Yeah, because my experiences in the field have been run of the fucking mill, all the way."

Lucy cocked an eyebrow. "All right, boys. Now I'm interested. Let's try and keep this civil, 'cause it's too damned hot to try and separate you two if it comes to claws. Malcolm, what do you mean about what Galliards should be doing in the world?"

Malcolm nodded. "Well, we Moon Dancers have always had a responsibility to the Garou Nation. I don't want to downplay the other auspices, but to be honest, in some ways I think our role is the most important."

"In what way? How?" Samir gave Lucy an odd look, and then remembered her sobriquet.

Malcolm smirked. "Heck, let's do this right." He removed his shirt and folded it under him to form a cushion. "Let me tell you a story."

## *Origins*

"Some time ago, before the Garou fragmented into tribes, we all had the same purpose under Gaia. Simply put, we were all warriors. Now, we weren't the same sort of warriors as the Ahroun — we weren't all meant to be leaders, obviously. We were simply supposed to hunt down and kill anything that threatened our Mother.

"But somewhere along the way, that got problematic. I imagine it was because we weren't diverse enough, and because we could think as humans as well as wolves, we got bored. So some of us started spicing things up a bit. Those folks would sneak around and play tricks, and act as spies. They were the runts of the litter and the cunning werewolves, and they did what they did under the new moon. Likewise, under the crescent moon, certain things are visible that don't show up in any other light. The werewolves who noticed them also realized that these beings could teach us much, and so they started hunting under the crescent moon to better understand these spirits. And so on.

"Those of us who decided to hunt under the gibbous moon, well, we're kind of hard to explain. The gibbous moon is almost, but not quite, fulfillment. It's midway between the balance and attention to detail that is the Philodox moon and the passion and rage that is the Ahroun moon. We understood the need for law and order and tradition, but yearned for the purity of the hunt and the kill. In short, we were kind of torn.

"We hunted and howled under the gibbous moon because we understood longing for completeness, but knew that we couldn't have everything. We found, by and by, that we could tell stories and sing songs about perfection and fulfillment, even if we couldn't have it. And in a way, we found what we were looking for in so doing, because by telling stories of great deeds, we could teach lessons and inspire passion. And somewhere in all of this, Luna blessed us with a kind of mixed bag of Gifts.

"Think about it. Galliards have some pretty diverse capabilities. We can look through other folks' minds and call up illusions, but also walk the moon paths and commune with animals. I think it's because Luna understands that we need that kind of edge. We've got a demanding job."

Some younger Garou had gathered near and now nodded in agreement as Malcolm finished. Samir, however, rolled his eyes and looked to Lucy for permission to speak. She nodded at him.

"That's all very well, Malcolm, but you haven't really said what Galliards do. Yeah, we tell stories. Yeah, we inspire folks. But there's a heck of a lot more to it than that."

## *The Last Songs*

"I'm not going to debate your history — it isn't as if that's anything more than a fable, at least for practical purposes." Malcolm bristled at this, but Samir continued. "But think for a minute about what it's like being a Galliard now. The world's ending, the Wyrm's opening its jaws to swallow Gaia. We've got the humans spoiling everything they can touch, including each other. They're blowing each other up over the stupidest shit. And here's the Garou Nation with its collective thumb up its—"

"I think we may have wandered a bit, Samir," Lucy said quietly.

Samir shook his head. "Right, sorry. My point is, if there's one thing our auspice suffers from, it's that our role is pretty darned vague. Really, we've got a lot of different hats to wear, depending on where we are. Pack, sept, tribe, Garou Nation as a whole, and so forth."

### *The Ccaffold in the Sept*

"With that in mind, I think the sept is a good place to start. What are Galliards taught when they're brought into our society? Of course it depends on the sept in question, but let's think about what they see.

"Galliards can fulfill any of the sept positions, but you'll find us more commonly in some than others. Warders, for example, are usually Ahroun, not Galliards. The two positions we take on most often are Master of the Howl and Talesinger."

Lucy glanced between them and said nothing, but certainly felt the tension in the air.

"Now, the Master of the Howl's an easy one," continued Samir, trying to pretend he didn't feel the sudden strain in the air himself. "Galliards learn the Gifts associated with howls and communication, and we learn how to make those howls into song. So of course we're going to be the ones who begin the moots. I've met Howl-Masters of other auspices, but not many. It just makes sense — we're the werewolves who can summon the Garou from all over the sept, and who can really infuse them with the spirit of the moot."

"Now, Talesinger is a different matter. Sure, we tell stories well —"

"More to being a Galliard than 'telling stories,' man." Samir looked up at Malcolm, irritated at the interruption. Malcolm flicked a bit of dirt off his shoulder and continued regardless. "It's not just about telling stories. You know that. It's about making sure the listener is getting the right lesson out of the story. And that's half of the Talesinger's job right there. Give you a good example.

"I was visiting a very special caern in the Great White North not too long ago. Had the pleasure of listening to a story told by a Red Talon Talesinger,

although to call it a 'story' is to do a real disservice to her skills. Part howl, part pantomime—

"Yeah, I've seen lupus tell stories, Malcolm."

Rather than argue and perhaps lose his turn to speak, Malcolm waved his hand at Samir and continued. "Anyway, the subject matter was about one of the tenets of the Litany. Specifically, it was about a werewolf who fell to eating human flesh." Malcolm seemed to relish the look on Lucy's face. "I know, pretty upsetting... to us. If any of the three of us told that story, there'd be no debate which side of the matter our opinions were on. But the way she told it, you actually felt hungry afterwards. It was incredible. The way she told the story — her body language and the scents she gave off — acted just like word choice and inflection would to a verbal storyteller like you or me. The whole point of storytelling is to elicit a response from the listener, and a good Galliard, no matter what method he — or she — uses, can elicit the response he wants."

Samir shook his head. "Bullshit." Lucy glanced at him, but didn't stop him from speaking. "Bullshit, Malcolm. The point of storytelling is to pass along a lesson, a bit of news, whatever. Just eliciting a response — shit, that's what American movies do. They jerk everything heartstring you have. That's not

storytelling, that's manipulation. A Galliard has a sacred duty to the Garou Nation, and that duty is to keep the lore and the traditions alive by presenting them in a format that young cubs can understand. And that means that no matter how you dress up a story, there has to be some truth to it, otherwise it's just a method of getting folks fired up."

Malcolm snorted derisively. "Yeah, and what's the Talesinger's job, anyway? Last moot I attended, the Talesinger goes onstage right before the Revel. It's our — sorry, my — job to get the assemblage ready for the what's coming next, and that means snapping them out of whatever depression the Cracking the Bone put them in. Let's face it, that section of the moot isn't normally the most cheerful these days. But we owe it to the caern's totem to put all we've got into the Revel. And that means the Talesinger needs to get folks in the mood. If that involves a little tugging on heartstrings, I'm game."



"So what are you saying, the role of the Galliard in the sept is a spin doctor?"

"Sure. Just as much, if not more, as it's his role to be a teacher and a chronicler."

Lucy cleared her throat. "Anything else?" Both Galliards thought for a moment, and then Malcolm spoke up.

"Yeah, I've got another one. Maybe this is just the septs I've frequented of late, but does it seem like the Gatekeeper tends to be a Galliard?" Samir nodded. "I've been thinking about why that is. I mean, it makes sense for the Warder and the Wyrm Foe to be Ahroun, but why shouldn't the Gatekeeper be a Philodox or a Theurge, given their tasks, rather than a Galliard? My guess is that we just fall into that role because it's the most social of the major sept positions."

Samir rolled his eyes. "I think it's coincidence. Higher-ranked Galliards often get taught the secrets of moon bridges. I think it just happens that Galliards take the role of Gatekeeper often enough to be noticeable, but I don't think it's any kind of real trend."

Malcolm shrugged. "Like I said, I've been visiting a very specific type of sept the last few years, so I'll concede that I can't support this very well. But really, if I ever decide to sue for a sept position, it'll be Gatekeeper. There's just something about the job that appeals. You get to deal with... let's see," he ticked the titles off his fingers. "The caern's totem, the lunes on the moon bridge, visiting Garou, leaving Garou, and you get to choose emissaries. It speaks to the leadership-oriented side of our auspices, because Gatekeepers kind of get to manage others. They get to be the first to greet incoming guests a lot of times, and that gives them first crack at news or good gossip." He shrugged. "I don't know, makes sense to me." He took a drink from his bottle of water, and Samir took the opportunity to speak again.

"Of course, Galliards wind up performing some pretty important rites for the sept. Naturally, anybody can learn any given rite, but a few rituals fall naturally under our purview. Probably the most important is—"

"The Gathering for the Departed." Malcolm cast his eyes downward as he said it. Samir didn't notice.

"No, actually, I was going to say the Rite of Accomplishment. Don't get me wrong — the Gathering is certainly important. But it just seems to me that the responsibility to the dead could just as easily be fulfilled by a Theurge, whereas the duty of helping younger Garou along their paths is best served by someone who can make them feel proud of their achievements and help them remember what lessons they've learned." Lucy nodded, and looked to Malcolm for a rebuttal. He had one ready.

"You could just as easily say the reverse, though. Why not have a packmate of the guy receiving the Rite of Accomplishment perform it, or at least a tribemate? A Philodox, for example, might represent the recipient's deeds more faithfully than a Galliard. But I see your point. The thing about the Gathering for the Departed, though... how to put this." Malcolm pursed his lips and ran his hand over a leather band around his left wrist.

"OK, try this. Funerals among normal humans aren't really for the deceased. They're to help the living deal with the fact of death, and so there's a lot of talk about remanding the person's soul to God, blah blah blah. Honestly, I think that's because human funerals have lost a lot of their celebratory aspects. Oh, you'll see it sometimes—I've been to Irish wakes—but every human funeral I've been to feels like there's something missing, something that everyone wants to say but can't quite put their finger on it. They used to know it, I'm guessing, but as people have grown apart from ancient traditions, their funerary rites have dwindled to just another showpiece for their hollow faith, just another way to bargain their way out of a similar fate."

"Our rites have some of the 'go to Gaia' aspect, but mostly it's about celebrating the deceased's life and/or seeking retribution as necessary. It's more about the werewolf who's just died, and putting everything right with him so that he, in turn, can return to guide his descendants. And given that even the more 'primitive' tribes look at it that way, I'm guessing that's the way it's always been. You talk about making sure that stories have a lesson — what better way to make sure the lessons survive than by ensuring that the venerable dead have somewhere to go?"

"And, yeah, maybe a Theurge could handle the spiritual side of things. But if there was ever a time for acting as a spin doctor, baby, it's during a Gathering." Malcolm grinned, but the look behind his eyes was sad. He'd obviously performed one or two Gatherings himself. "As long as the deceased wasn't tainted and didn't bring shame on his sept and tribe, a good Galliard can always find something good to say. The Gathering isn't a time for brutal honesty. It's a time to send someone off into the great hereafter," he paused and looked at Samir, "or the great unknown, in some cases, secure in the knowledge that they served Gaia. No human eulogy ever comes close to that, because they don't have the same assurance that we do. And that's in large part why we're not just 'reporters' or 'storytellers' — even our so-called oral traditions are more history than mythology."

Samir let out a quiet "hmmph" but didn't interrupt.

"I think it's worth mentioning, too," continued Malcolm, "that cliah Galliards and higher-ranked Galliards have very different roles." Samir cocked an

eyebrow, but nothing in his face revealed if he agreed or not. Malcolm went on. "Elder Galliards have started to grasp a pretty essential truth of storytelling that anyone who's studied folklore already knows — it's all been done before."

Samir groaned. "Great Gaia, not this old chestnut. No original stories? That what you're going to say?"

"Not exactly. Just that the higher-ranking folks in our auspice have heard all of the ancient tales of their tribe, their sept, and probably most of the Garou Nation. That gives you two possibilities, provided you aren't still with a pack. Either take a sept position, and we've already mentioned that Gatekeeper is a popular choice, for whatever reason, or travel the world and fill in the gaps in your repertoire."

The conversation paused for several uncomfortable seconds. Each of the rivals watched the other, apparently expecting the other to interject with some comment about his globetrotting. Surprisingly, neither did. Samir, however, spoke before Malcolm could continue.

"Well, just in response to your 'seen it all' theory, why, then, do we travel the world? If you've heard all possible stories, why do you go looking for new ones — especially in the caerns you visit? You think the *Talons* are going to tell you something you haven't heard?"

Malcolm growled, and his bare arms rippled as the muscles began contorting. Lucy laid a hand on his shoulder and shook her head, and he took a breath. "Touché."

Samir smirked, but didn't press the issue of Malcolm's wanderings. "I think that exactly the opposite of what you suggest happens as Galliards get older. I think that they realize that in each and every fable is a real experience, one that just might turn the tide of the war. And sometimes the only way to learn the truth is to seek it out and hear the stories as close to firsthand as possible. If that means you learn stories from some old, grizzled werewolf who hasn't left his home sept in a decade, then you make the trek to that sept. Either way, you're continuing a zest for learning stories that begins... before the First Change, I suppose."

Malcolm shook his head. "I don't know about that. A lot of the Galliards I've met only started getting into the storyteller side of themselves after joining a pack."

### *The Galliard in the Pack*

"You've never been part of a pack, have you, Samir?" The Silent Strider considered taking offense at the question, but Malcolm's stoned didn't imply any malice or one-upmanship.

"No. I was supposed to once, and it fell through pretty explosively."

Malcolm nodded. "I was in a pack for a while. Couple of years, really. But what do you think a Galliard's role in a pack should be?"

It was a gamble, and all of the Garou present knew it. Malcolm was allowing Samir to speak first, banking on his ability to make better points when his time came to answer. Samir didn't look nervous, however. "Well, we said something about 'reporters' earlier. Frankly, I think that's a pretty good analogy. A Galliard is an investigative reporter par excellence, or should be, anyway. He's got to remember what happens to the pack, and that means that while it's often the Ahroun that gets the pack up in the morning to train and practice tactics, the Galliard is one watching his pack and making sure they're doing what they should be. Which means Galliards aren't often alphas, but we make natural betas."

"The Ahroun may be able to smack down the other Garou in the pack, but the Galliard has a different form of authority. Since it's the Moon-Dancer who tells the stories of the pack's exploits, either at a moot or to the Talesinger, a pack's Galliard gets to determine how the entire pack looks to the sept. That can make a big difference in terms of renown, which in turn can make or break a werewolf who wants to challenge for a higher rank or ask to be taught a new Gift."

Samir gave Malcolm a sidelong glance before continuing. "Of course, no right-thinking Galliard would use that advantage to manipulate or coerce his packmates. That kind of thing is definitely dishonorable, and I've heard stories of Galliards undergoing the Voice of the Jackal for that kind of shit." Malcolm smirked, but didn't interject. "Likewise, a while a Philodox makes a good representative from a sept or a pack during times of peace, you're better off with a Galliard in times of war. We've got 'people skills,' as annoying as that term is, and we can use them to smooth over a misunderstanding, or fan it into a full-scale war."

"Here's an example of that kind of skill. I wound up running with a pack in Ireland for a while — basically, I needed a favor from Owl once, and the trade-off was that I hang out with this pack for a month or so. Anyway, their Galliard was a sneaky bitch. She was a Bone Gnawer, and she could hang out and punch shoulders with just about anybody."

"Well, this pack was having trouble with this annoyingly evasive pack of Dancers. So the Galliard scouts around the city for a while, finds the Dancers, and actually introduces herself. Don't ask me how she did this without getting torn apart. She's real subtle about it, but basically she lets it slip that her pack is about a whisker away from walking the Spiral. She hangs out with them for a while — rumor has it she even sat in on one of their rites, but that's not confirmed — and then finally she says she's ready to sell out her pack."

"Of course, she led the Dancers right into an ambush. But they bought into it, all because she took to the time

to communicate with the twisted bastards, to learn their names and their personalities, to chat them up — in short, she gained their trust." He paused to sip his drink. "She was the quintessential waning-moon Galliard. If she had been waxing, maybe she could have convinced one of those Dancers to repent?"

"Yeah, right," muttered Malcolm.

"Anyway, in addition to watching everything going on and keeping tabs on his packmate's activities, *and* occasionally stirring emotions to a fever pitch, a Galliard also has to be a kind of cheerleader."

Malcolm groaned. "Rah, rah, Gaia. You're right, though. A big part of any Moon-Dancer's job is making sure that his pack doesn't fall into despair. Let's face it; we all see shit that makes us want to give it up. But a Galliard has a big advantage — we can see it in terms of a story."

Samir rolled his eyes. "Now, *that's* deep."

"Just hear me out, OK? The Half-Moons are the only other auspice with our appreciation for history, and they only get the bare facts, for the most part. So let's take, for example, a pack that sees a river slimed to death by pollution. The Realm is bad, the Umbra is worse, and the whole pack is just standing there feeling like hell, because what can they really do?

"The Ahroun might see Banes that need killin'. The Philodox knows that the Litany commands the pack to clean this up. The Theurge is probably half in tears at the damage to the local spirits, and the Ragabash... who knows? But the Galliard sees this sludgy river and remembers a story about something similar that happened in the past — even the very recent past — and a tactic that might be of some use. Or, at the very least, he can tell a story that might lift the pack's spirits out of the doldrums and get them moving again. The Ahroun and the Philodox can go being tactician and lawman, respectively, using the Galliard's story as a starting point—"

"What, so we're the fucking *idea men*?" Samir waved his hand in the air as though trying to clear smoke. "Oh, for God's sake, no. We may be able to tell some stories and lift some spirits, and that's great, but every situation is different. Learning the histories is important, but we're out there *making* new stories every day. It falls to us to make sure the legends of tomorrow are told and retold, so that Garou the world over know that there are some warriors of Gaia out there who are doing their jobs. You keep telling stories about the distant past, and the younger werewolves lose touch, just like human youths do when they're asked to believe in the Bible or the Quran or some other ancient — and totally inaccessible — text."

Malcolm stood up and raised his hands in frustration. "So we're supposed to dumb down millennia of learning so that the last generation can understand it? No way. I think that we're teachers before interpreters."

"That's really at odds with your reputation, and some of the stuff you've said already," Lucy observed.

"My reputation has nothing to do with my presentation of legends or stories of other Garou, thank you very much," said Malcolm, a bit more curtly than was probably politic. "And I've said nothing so far that indicates I'm in favor of altering the content of our heritage to suit the less-than-competent attention spans of today. In cases of political expediency, it might be all right to doctor things a bit—"

"Jesus, can you hear yourself, Malcolm?" Samir also stood up in disgust. "You're saying it's not acceptable to put a story in a more modern context so that a modern listener can understand it without an hour of explanation, but it is acceptable to lie about the contents of a story in order to manipulate the listener? You should work in Hollywood."

Both Galliards went quiet for a moment. Lucy saw that they had locked gazes and that both had bared their teeth. She stood up and gave them both a shove that sent them sprawling over the benches. "It's not that kind of challenge, boys. Get back to it before I declare it a draw."

Samir and Malcolm muttered apologies toward Lucy and took their seats again. Lucy continued. "Right, I think we've about covered a Galliard's role in the pack. What's next? The tribe?"

### *The Craftsmen of the Tribes*

"Very tricky topic," began Samir. "Each of the tribes has a very special and specific culture, and stories figure into all of them in different ways. I'd better start with the ones I know best, like my own tribe.

"The Silent Striders, of course, often trade stories and news for shelter and food. Other tribes do the "wandering storyteller" thing occasionally, but of course we're the best at it — we've had more practice. Very often, the news we bring is bad and the stories more warning than entertainment, which is probably why I like to tell stories that are both true and accessible. If a story is just for entertainment purposes, a Strider will say that at the get-go. If it's a warning, he'll sacrifice poetry for utility — sometimes." Samir paused. "Now, as far as other tribes—"

"Not going to mention the *Pakiv Swatura*, Samir?" Malcolm gave his rival an insolent smirk. Noting Lucy's questioning look, he said, "Absolutely beautiful. It's a form of storytelling through dance. You need a real appreciation of the art form to understand any kind of story being told that way, but watching the dancers spin themselves in the air is pretty impressive in and of itself." He glanced over at Samir, who looked openly surprised. "Oh, you shocked that I know some shit?"

"Actually, yeah. Anyway, that's my tribe. I spend a lot of time in urban septs, and so I've met a few Galliards of the two urban tribes. You might think they've got similar tastes, but the truth is that their storytelling couldn't be more different.

"Glass Walkers lean towards multi-media more than any other tribe, of course. Their Galliards are as likely to be graphic designers and animators than conventional storytellers, or at least they're more likely to use technology alongside conventional storytelling. Likewise, they wind up in charge of a lot of the information dissemination for the tribe, which means a lot of Glass Walker Galliards are proficient with surveillance equipment — bugs, wiretaps, miniature cameras, that kind of thing. Also, they'll incorporate technological spirits into their 'presentations' and the whole thing ends up feeling midway between a seminar and a cult meeting. It's scary at times, but pretty damned original, too."

"The Bone Gnawers, on the other hand, get pretty down and dirty when telling stories. There's a real street-performer vibe to them. Their Galliards like to tell tales from the trenches, and they'll walk around while talking, pull people up from the audience to illustrate points, and tailor their stories to their home city, even if it took place thousands of years ago." Samir paused to relish Malcolm's disapproving look. "I love it. To me, that's exactly how storytelling should be. Remember what I said earlier, about how modern Galliards are out there in the world, making the new legends? The Bone Gnawers embody that idea. Their Galliards are well connected, and not just with humans. You'd be surprised what a stray cat sees."

"I haven't been to a lot of urban caerns recently, so I'll just take your word on those two tribes," said Malcolm. "But out in the woods, the focus is still on the older, more traditional stories and methods of telling them. Makes sense — not a lot of TV or movies for them to base stuff on."

"Just to go with the most extreme example of that, consider the Red Talons. You'd expect them to just howl real loud, right? Turns out they've got minds like steel traps, pardon the expression. They remember everything, just to make sure they get the details of a story right. Plus, they tell stories that have been passed down for centuries or longer, pretty much unchanged, because the Talons don't reckon time the same way we do. In fact, there's one Talon sept in Poland—"

"Malcolm, focus." Lucy stretched her back.

"Right, sorry. Anyway, Talon Galliards don't just tell the stories, they're charged with making sure that the right facets of them get emphasized."

"That's really something all Galliards should do," remarked Samir.



"Yeah, it is, but it doesn't always happen that way. Ever been to a Silver Fang moot? The stories those guys tell, my god. To listen to them, the Fangs are completely blameless, and are totally down to save the world with nary a muscle strain, just as soon as the stars are in alignment. Silver Fang Galliards are brought up on Silver Fang legends from day one, taught about Silver Fang heroes and Silver Fang kings, fed Silver Fang Crunchies...." He shook his head. "It's no wonder they're so goddamned tunnel-visioned about their stories." Samir grunted uncomfortably and shifted. "What?"

"Nothing. I've only ever met one Silver Fang Galliard, and I hate to say it, but he was pretty much just like you describe. But I'd also point out that he was an older guy — an Elder, actually — and wasn't at all well when I spoke with him. He told me some old legends, and they really did have this kind of Russian fairy-tale feel; very grim, yet heroic."

"You'll find that doesn't change much from Fang to Fang. Even their lupus Galliards are like that. I think they over-teach them. Might be the same problem with the Fianna—"

"Hold on there, chief." Samir held up a hand. "The Galliards among the Fianna are the measuring stick by which we should all be judged. You think I'm full of shit? Ever seen the Fianna go into battle? Their Galliards are leading the way with war drums, bagpipes, war howls, and whatever the hell else they can get their hands on to freak out their enemies. And when it's all over, they can tell the story with enough fire and passion to make you feel like you were really there. I hung out with a Fianna Galliard for a while south of here, right after I got back into the States, and asked her what had been going on. She told me about how she'd seen a caern fall, and you know, after she was done, we actually drove two hours to a city to go hunting vampires because I was too pumped up to sleep. You'll never hear a Fianna Galliard say 'You had to be there.'

"Really, although the Fianna get a lot of the good press for their Galliards, I've gotta say that the Get of Fenris have a pretty good lock on the psychological aspects of storytelling, too. Be it to scare the bejeezus out of enemies or get everybody in the mood to fight, the Skalds of the Get can do the job. Their storytelling is interactive, much like the Bone Gnawers; they'll grab you out of your seat and use you as a dummy for battle scenes. If you're lucky, they stay in Homid form while they do it. They sometimes suffer from the same kind of thing that the Fangs do — everything's gotta be about the Get and their glorious warriors and noble self-sacrifice — but then, most of their stories are war stories and their standards for fighters are pretty high."

"What, and like ours aren't?" Malcolm creased his eyebrows petulantly. "The Shadow Lords aren't always

skulking around at night plotting to assassinate the Silver Fangs, you know. Our Galliards know a lot of dirty secrets about everybody, and that requires that we be good at allegory, implication, and, yes, lies. Teaching our lupus how to tell a story without naming names is a big challenge, but since a lot of our best stories are better left as fables, it's necessary. You want to know about using lore and stories to scare an enemy? The best kind of story is the kind that ends with a big fuck-you, or at least a twist ending. We use stories to make people comfortable, get them drinking, make them laugh — and then, in with the knife." Samir looked at his drink quizzically. Malcolm laughed out loud. "Oh, give me a break. We reserve that treatment for our enemies, or worst rivals at least."

"That doesn't make me feel any better."

Malcolm smiled. "Wasn't meant to." He leaned over the table and grinned. "Hey," he said quietly, "ever seen a Black Spiral Dancer Galliard tell a story?" Samir cocked his head carefully. "I have. You want to talk about some scary shit? It was like being at a tent revival in the seventh circle of Hell. Everybody there was screaming and gibbering and howling, while this crazy bitch was rolling all over the floor and yelling out prophecy and half-snarled sentences, changing shape. It was intense. Not great storytelling, but intense. I don't have the first clue what the subject matter of the 'story' actually was, but man, after it was over, everybody there was ready to go. That's about the time I lit out for friendlier climes."

Malcolm noted the looks on the other two werewolves' faces and cleared his throat. "Anyway, speaking of incomprehensible stories, I had the good fortune — I guess — of watching a Stargazer Galliard perform once. Ever see Japanese Noh drama? It's very archetypal, and very hard to follow if you're not Japanese and haven't studied theatre. Stargazer stories are a little like that. The characters are recognizable on some level, almost instinctively, but the presentation is very formal. They don't have the same level of passion that most Garou do, but they're still very intense, if that makes any sense. Their stories won't get you fired up to go kick ass, but they'll sure get you thinking."

"Children of Gaia Galliards are like that, too, I've found," murmured Samir, looking around carefully to make sure the sept's Gatekeeper wasn't listening. "It isn't that they aren't passionate, but dammit, they don't seem to get that we're warriors and that blood and guts are OK. Not everything has to have a happy ending. In fact, it probably won't. I think that their Moon-Dancers feed the tribe's general delusions about winning the War through non-violence. I admit I'm biased on that subject — too much time in the Middle East, I guess."

"No, I'm with you. But that may be too much time among the Talons," chuckled Malcolm. "Well, on the

other side of the coin, the native tribes have both passion and blood in good measure." He smiled and looked past Samir at the carvings on an ancient oak, glyphs he knew to be Uktena in origin. "It's funny, really. With the Uktena, you get kind of psychological or supernatural horror stories. A lot of their old tales involve ancient, restless spirits and how to bind them. Rumor has it that their Galliards are taught how to relay important information in allegory and still tell an interesting story. I don't know if that's true in all cases, but I have noticed that the Uktena stories I've heard seem just a little too innocuous. Like there's always a joke I'm missing. Of course, the other thing about the Uktena is that they'll soak up any cultural concept that isn't nailed down, so you can get anything from sand paintings to shared stories to interpretive dance in an Uktena moot.

"Now, the other surviving Pure Tribe, the Wendigo, though... wow. Their stories are brutal and bloody, but still retain that kind of mystical 'Thing-That-Should-Not-Be' ambiance. They put a lot of emphasis on maintaining old tradition through stories, and claim that in those stories are keys to beating our worst enemies — Leeches, Banes, even the Dancers. I don't know how the hell they'd know, since we Europeans brought a lot of those problems with us when we crossed over, but then, 'the Northern lights have seen queer sights,' right?"

Lucy smirked. "I'll have that poem running roughshod through my head all night now."

Malcolm grinned at her. "Sorry. Anyway, the Wendigo Galliards have some pretty specific methods of telling stories. Often, it's a group thing — the bravest or most honored warriors get to stand up and take on the roles of the winning side of the story, while the younger or just unlucky sept members get to pretend to lose."

"Yeah, I've seen that kind of thing. Actually, the Uktena do it too, and I've seen the Children pick up on some of that. Traditions spread." Samir shrugged. "It's probably good for us. Who'd we miss? Oh, right, the Black Furies." He drummed his fingers on the table. "On the one hand, they tell some beautiful tales. The play flutes, lyres, and so forth, and sing songs that are just haunting. Some are funny, most are just moving. But then I hear stories of what the Furies *really* do when they tell stories, the really wild, Bacchanalian stuff. Mad women in the woods, calling down the heavens and bringing in spirits to illustrate their sagas. Never seen it, and I didn't hear it from a reliable source, so I don't know. And no sane man ever gets *near* a Fury sept without being invited, so I'm not likely to find out."

Malcolm nodded. "Yeah, I don't think I could pass as female, even if I can pass as lupus sometimes." Neither man noticed Lucy's smile.

## *Growing Up Galliard*

The sun had begun to creep behind the trees, and from somewhere in the distance, a howl sounded. All three Garou perked up, trying to identify the howl, and then nodded as they recognized it as an alpha summoning his pack. "That'd be Jesse Bane-Skinner. Young Ahroun. Seems pretty competent."

Samir chortled. "Needs to learn to howl, though."

"Easy for you to say," retorted Malcolm. "Probably was busy learning to fight. Is there a Galliard in Jesse's pack?"

Lucy thought for a minute. "Yeah. A young lupus called Underfoot."

"That's a great image," Malcolm laughed. "Bet she had something funny happen on her Rite of Passage."

Lucy slapped a hand on the table. "There's a good question, experts. What *about* a Galliard's young life and Rite of Passage? What kinds of things should happen to turn them into perfect Galliards like yourselves?" Malcolm gave her a polite smile, but Samir grimaced.

## *Galliards as Cubs*

"I don't know who claimed to be 'perfect,' but I'll answer the question. Of course it depends on breed as to what kind of young life a Galliard has, even after the First Change.

"Homid Galliards are often the types of people that remember stuff. Movie quotes, song lyrics, what people say and why. They tend to be confidants — right up until the Curse takes hold. More often than not, we're relieved to find out we're werewolves, just because it's nice to find out that it isn't our fault that our friends have suddenly started avoiding us. Once a homid Galliard starts undergoing training as a Garou, we tend to delve pretty deeply into the most exotic legends we can find. I hate to admit it, but like Malcolm says, coming from a modern culture that bombards us with imagery and information all the time, it's easy to get jaded. But knowing — or believing, at least — that these stories really happened makes it that much more exciting. A homid Galliard can keep his uncle up all night asking 'and then what happened?'"

"Lupus Galliards, on the other paw—"

"Ten points from you, Malcolm," groaned Lucy.

"Sorry. Feral Galliards also have great memories pre-Change. They remember where the herds go for safety, where the dangerous parts of the forests are, what time of year the creek floods, and so forth. Just like in Garou packs, they aren't usually alphas, but make great betas — not great tacticians or bullies, but good at keeping the others in line, if that makes any sense. Once wolf-born Moon-Dancers Change, they tend to learn very quickly. There's something about a Galliard's natural bent towards memory and storytelling that also helps in reconciling the wolf-heart and human-mind—"

"Huh?"

"Sorry. Quick explanation: Animal instinct and human analysis often run counter to each other. Reconciling them is tough for any of us, but especially for lupus, in my opinion. But Galliards seem to have an easier time of it, probably because the notion of stories and learning from the past is already natural to them."

"And then we have the metis. The Mules have one big advantage, I guess — they're part of Garou society from day one. Whether they're treated like shit or not, they get to hear these stories all their lives, so when their First Change comes and they get to participate, they're two steps ahead of Galliards of the other breeds." He paused to sip his water, and then raised a finger. "It just occurred to me that a lot of the metis Galliards I've seen incorporate a lot of self-deprecating humor into their stories. Lots of times it's centered on whatever their particular handicap is. Knew a metis Galliard at one point who was blind. He could get around all right — his other senses were frighteningly keen — but he'd trip over people or bump into trees during stories if it would be funny. Stuff like that." He looked at Samir. "You know what I mean?"

Samir nodded. "Yeah, I've seen that, too. Met a metis in Egypt name of Exalted-of-Gaia. She was allergic to silver — I mean, *really* allergic. She'd break out in hives if it got too near her, her eyes would burn, stuff like that. She'd use that to make fun of any hardass who came into her sept carrying a klaive or silver bullets — kind of like, 'what are you, nuts?' She was a Gatekeeper, come to think of it."

"A metis Gatekeeper?" Malcolm shook his head.

Lucy and Samir both glared at him. "So?" they chorused.

"Nothing, I guess. That's fine. Anyway, so what's typical of *all* young Galliards? Good memory?"

"Right," said Samir. "Respect for history, interest in stories, obviously."

"Language," said Lucy. The other two werewolves turned to her. "Sorry, go ahead."

"No, you're right," said Samir. "Most lupus and metis Galliards seem to learn human languages pretty quickly, and I've seldom met a homid who spoke only one language. How many do you speak, Malcolm?"

"You first."

Samir thought. "Four. English, Spanish, Arabic, and Garou."

Malcolm frowned. "Garou doesn't count, that's instinctive. We can all do that."

"Not equally well."

"Yeah, OK, that's true," the Shadow Lord conceded. "And, not to brag, but the Moon-Dancers pick up on it

easily. Probably because a lot of the good stories get told in Garou, so we've got to learn the nuances to tell them right."

Lucy poked Malcolm in the arm. "How many languages, Malcolm?"

Malcolm blushed. "Two, fluently. English and French. I can get by in a lot of others, though."

### *The Rite of Passage*

Samir chuckled. "Guess you haven't been around as much as I'd heard."

Malcolm scratched his temple with his middle finger. "So, anyway, these cubs with good memories and language skills and a nose for news go through a lot of training. We don't tend to get taught *how* to tell stories, I've found. That kind of thing is hard to teach, and besides, every Moon-Dancer's got his own style. Mine's nothing like my uncle's was. What we're taught is the importance of doing it, and the reasons for that importance vary."

"And we've already heard 'em," interjected Lucy. "What about the Rite of Passage?" Both Galliards began talking at once, and Lucy raised her hands. "Whoa! Samir!"

"Thank you," he said, smiling sweetly. "Our Rites of Passage differ by tribe, of course, but much of the time, they involve telling or re-telling a story. Sometimes, we'll have to *find* a story; getting it out of a spirit or another werewolf. Others, we'll need to create one. It's usually in keeping with what a mentor teaches us, though."

"Yeah, usually," growled Malcolm. "Unless your mentor is a sneaky fucker like mine was. My Rite of Passage was fun. He sent me out into the woods and then used a Gift to call a Wyrm-creature. I knew exactly what the howl meant, so here I am, in the middle of the night in the forest, waiting for said Wyrm-creature to jump me."

Samir frowned. "What the hell was the point of that?"

"It took me a long time to figure it out, but I think it was a test of my courage and my ability to adapt to a fluid situation. Which, when you think about it, is important to any Garou, but very important to a Moon-Dancer. We can't afford to lose our heads no matter how bad things get, because we're the ones the other Garou look to for support and inspiration." He cast his eyes down. "I guess I did all right, because I passed the Rite and everything, but to this day I question the wisdom of my mentor's challenge. What if he'd called up something *really* horrific, something I couldn't handle?"

Lucy patted Malcolm's shoulder. "I'm sure he knew what he was doing."

Malcolm looked up and steeled his face again. "Yeah, probably. But as Samir said, that's not typical of our initiations. It's usually does involve a test of cunning,

memory, and skill. Sometimes diplomacy, sometimes combat. Depends on the tribe. But we all have to tell the story afterwards and make it sound good." The other Garou nodded in agreement.

### *Life Cycle*

"After the Rite of Passage, though," Samir said, "whether we go on to join a pack or not, the urge to remember and retell is probably our most defining characteristic. And our tendency to talk a lot and go off on tangents."

"Actually, you guys aren't as bad," said Lucy. "I've only had to reign you in a couple of times."

"Well, we are the perfect Galliards, right? Anyway, as Galliards grow up, we start to see patterns, understand how stories fit together — chapters, acts, climax, resolution, whatever. Living in Garou society is better than a handful of degrees in theater, writing, and whatever else, because storytelling is part of our heritage, and our heritage is a living, breathing thing."

"You know, I said exactly that a while ago," Malcolm reminded him. "Remember that bit about seeing things in terms of a story? A Galliard can ask himself, 'Where am I in terms of the beginning and end of this matter? If I were telling this tale at a moot, what would come next?' Yeah, it's kind of a backward way to think about a problem, but it works more often than not." He cleared his throat and took a drink of water. "Problem is, of course, losing touch with reality."

Samir nodded vigorously. "If that ain't the truth. Biggest problem with a lot of Galliards, they completely forget that they aren't just living in a movie. They think that a well-constructed plan should go off without a hitch, that their enemies should behave consistently, and that the 'supporting cast' — like Kinfolk — should be only too willing to support them no matter what. Real life is a big letdown to us Gibbous Moons sometimes. I've seen a lot of rank challenges structured around dealing with a *real problem*, rather than a story about an old one."

"Rank challenges for Galliards can get pretty original, that's for sure. They have to," Malcolm cracked a smile, "because we've heard about all the old ones. That's one reason it's often considered acceptable for Galliards to challenge Garou of other auspices; it kind of guarantees we can't just delve into our mental trove of stories and figure out how to solve a problem."

Lucy broke in. "What's wrong with that, though? What's the big deal about using the past to solve the present's dilemmas? I'd think that's what Galliards are about."

The two Moon-Dancers started to speak up simultaneously. Malcolm apologized and gestured to Samir. "Well," Samir began, "nothing's wrong with it, *per se*. But

remember what I said about dealing with the real world? The stories of the past have been streamlined over the course of centuries, or even months, and that means they're a little too clean sometimes. The rough edges — all those pesky little details and setbacks that happen during problem-solving, get glossed over. It often benefits Galliards to have to face those problems. That's why I try to stress that the stories I tell are *stories*, not true-to-life renderings of events. Heck, the reason I can speak until sunrise isn't that I rattle off my shopping lists, it's that I know enough stories to do it. But that's a result of practice — so our challenges involve spontaneity and adaptation a lot. That's probably what your mentor was after, Malcolm, though I still think that's a damned freaky way to do it."

Malcolm nodded thoughtfully. "I challenged him for the rank of Fostern, too, actually. Not sure why, after my Rite of Passage. I guess I maybe I wanted to prove I wasn't as chicken-shit as he thought I was." He paused and glanced around them. The forest was growing dark and the air had grown cool. He pulled his shirt back on. "He sent me to a Get of Fenris sept and told me to compose a song of glory about it. Never mentioned that he had a reputation among the Garou there and they hated him, and that they knew whose protégé I was."

"Yeah, mine was pretty similar, if not as unpleasant," said Samir. "I actually challenged a Philodox. He made me solve a riddle — fucking complex one, too — and made me explain my reasoning as I went. If I couldn't cite a story at least a century old as my reason for making a decision, he wouldn't accept it."

"So it's all about heritage, either remembering the past or looking to the future," said Lucy quietly. The three of them sat back in the gloom of twilight and looked about, listening to the faint sounds of the sept preparing for the moot. They didn't have much time left. "What about the Umbra? Surely you guys have a place in the spirit worlds."

### *Galliards and Spirits*

"Of course we do," said Samir. "Some Galliards are more at home there than others. It's always a bummer to me when I go to Egypt, because it's dangerous to step sideways in a lot of places. I love being in the spirit worlds — besides the fact that it hones your ability to describe things to all senses, you can gain some perspectives in talking to spirits that you'd never get otherwise. Of course, that requires being able to talk to them, which is sometimes a pain."

"Ancestor-spirits are usually willing to talk." A pained look crossed Samir's face. Malcolm covered his mouth with his hand. "Oh, shit, I'm sorry. I completely forgot that you—"

"It's OK. Not being able to talk to our ancestors just means that my tribe remembers its history in other ways. Writings, dances like the Pakiv Swatura you mentioned, things like that. What's it like for you, talking with ancestor-spirits?"

Malcolm considered. "It's... confusing sometimes. They've got a very different take on things than we do. They don't speak with the years of experience you'd expect; it's more like they get stuck in their own minds and don't learn much more beyond when they were alive. Now, some are more lucid than others, and some more helpful, but I think it's an important part of a Galliard's ongoing battle to preserve heritage to be able to interpret what an ancestor says and wants. That means learning history. Just can't get away from that part, I guess. The more you know about context, the more sense the old tales make."

### *Galliards and Kinfolk*

"What about our heritage now? Our human and wolf Kin? You think that's part of your job? You guys feel like you're responsible for them?"

"We're all responsible for our Kinfolk, Lucy." Malcolm stood up to stretch. "But yeah, I see your question. With our human Kin — with humanity in general — we've got some major angst. We're not like the Ragabash, whom the Curse hinders only slightly. We're just a notch below the Ahroun in terms of raw Rage, and that means we're limited in what we can do. A lot of us who choose to take real professions in the human world try to be performers of some kind. A certain amount of eccentricity is permitted for actors, singers, and artists, and performing keeps us aloof from our audiences — we can express ourselves without interacting, so we don't scare people."

"With Kinfolk, who aren't scared of us as a matter of instinct, it's a little different. Galliards tend more towards monogamous relationships than other auspices—"

"Don't know where you've been, friend." Samir was also standing, stretching his legs like a runner. "A lot of the Galliards I've seen are real sluts. Myself included. But to be fair, it's not about sex, it's about passion. We spread ourselves around because we like interacting too much to be monogamous."

Malcolm shrugged. "OK. I think some Galliards stay with one partner exactly because of that passion — they find someone they can really click with, and that's a big draw for us. I'd also remind you that you're a vagabond, so you might have a different take on that sort of thing."

"So what are you?"

"Not a vagabond. Not by nature. I'm on a pretty specific mission."

Samir cocked his head. "Like what?"

Lucy stood up. "Uh, guys? Challenge? Galliards? Remember? We need to wrap this up; the moot's going to start in a sec."

Malcolm looked at Lucy and then back to Samir. "I don't know, I can't really find fault with much of what he said. I don't *agree* with all of it, but—"

"Yeah," Samir said, nodding. "I'd be happy to split the duty tonight, if you'd be amenable. I mean, I know you said you'd been asked to be Talesinger for services rendered, so if that's the case..."

Malcolm gave a guilty laugh. "Oh, I was lying about that. They did ask me, but it was because I was a guest and I got here first. I'll trade off stories with you, though, if the elders don't mind."

Lucy nodded. "They won't. I'll put in a word. Us Galliards have to stick together." She dropped down to Lupus form and trotted off into the forest as the Summoning howls began to ring over the sept.

Samir looked at Malcolm. "Did you know she was—"

"A Galliard? No, I thought she was a no-moon." Malcolm watched the wolf disappear into the trees. "Wow. Now *that's* diplomacy." He shook his head and looked up at the gibbous moon rising, and slowly changed to Lupus form. Samir followed suit.

"Race you," said Samir, his tongue lolling out.

"Nice try," answered Malcolm. "Come on, let's go before she takes the Talesinger position."

The two Moon-Dancers darted off towards the moot-fires. There were tales to be told tonight, and many werewolves waiting to hear them.

### *Telling Stories*

Playing a Galliard presents unique challenges to both the players and the Storyteller. Some players might feel intimidated by a Galliard's task of telling stories to the group. Others might feel nervous about the responsibility placed on them — if they do not represent the pack well, the pack may lose Renown, but if the Galliard lies, she risks her personal honor. Likewise, how much weight should a Storyteller place on a player's presentation of a story, especially if the character's Traits would indicate a more sterling performance than the player can muster? This section seeks to answer these and other questions.

On with the show!

### *Possibilities*

All of auspices are multi-faceted, and the Galliard is no exception. While the easy stereotype of the gibbous moon auspice is that of "Lorekeeper" or "bard," there are many other possibilities.

One of the first decisions a player can make to flesh out her Galliard character is whether that character is born under the waxing or waning gibbous moon. Waxing Galliards inspire their packmates with promises of rewards and victories, whereas waning Galliards goad their fellows on by frightening them with tales of defeat. In addition, waning Galliards are much more likely to use their gifts (and Gifts) to manipulate their fellow Garou, eliciting the emotions necessary to bring about a desirable end. Galliards of either stripe can be downright Machiavellian if necessary — bringing a saga to successful end might require methods that cause suffering (or even Renown loss) in the short term.

Something a Galliard's player should consider from the start is the character's relationship with her heritage. Moon-Dancers are the keepers of oral history and lore in a society that passes down almost all of its wisdom in such a manner. That means that no matter what tribe or breed, Galliards cannot escape the songs of the past. How the Garou feels about that should be a defining point in her personality.

Below are six "archetypes" for Moon-Dancers, along with notes on how they change when embodied by a waxing and waning Galliard.

### *The Historian*

Probably one of the most important and solid archetypal presentations of the Galliard, the historian is also the Lorekeeper. She might focus more on learning and collecting the stories of the past than on telling them, or she might feel that stories are only as useful as the talespinner makes them. The historian might be a traditionalist, telling stories in the Garou tongue exactly as they were hundreds of years ago, or she might instead choose to modernize them, moving their settings to the cities, relating them to events in human history for the benefit of homid Garou (who make up the bulk of the Garou Nation, after all). A Glass Walker creating computer-animated versions of her favorite stories embodies this archetype as easily as a traditionalist Fianna bard telling stories by the fire.

A historian might seek out legendry by venturing through the Umbra, consulting with elder Garou, traveling the world in search of forgotten lore, or by adventuring with a pack and discovering the legends of tomorrow. She might search for old prophecies, for a sign or an overlooked detail that might win the war against the Wyrm. However, the historian does not often create her own tales; she instead hones her skills at recalling or presenting those created and passed down by her forebears.

A waxing-moon historian has great respect for the authenticity of the old tales, and seeks to present them as faithfully as possible. A waning-moon sees legends as a

means to an end, which means that changing a detail here and there won't hurt anyone.

### *The Manipulator*

Galliards excel at guessing and guiding the emotions of others. When dealing with creatures as passionate as werewolves, being able to successfully goad one's fellows into one feeling or another is a powerful tool. The manipulator is superb at this sort of "guidance" and his greatest weapon is the ability to *listen*, rather than talk. By finding out secrets, proclivities, and details about others, he learns what buttons to push to elicit a response and feed into others' emotions. He learns to paint his enemies with the right brush so that his allies will do his work for him.

However, the manipulator is not necessarily a scheming bastard. The same archetype applies to those Galliards who choose to be diplomats and counselors. Being able to read emotions enables a Galliard to aid communication, which means that these Moon-Dancers make superb interpreters between tribes and breeds. They also commonly speak for their pack, even if not technically as alpha. And, when Harano descends, the manipulator can ease a werewolf back into the fight gently. "Subtlety" is this Garou's watchword.

Manipulators don't care as much about the legendry and heritage of the Garou Nation as a whole as they do about the history of one particular subject. They learn tribal histories because it enables them to know how to play other Garou; learning stories about a tribal hero's greatest victories — or dimmest failures — can help a Galliard ingratiate herself. A Child of Gaia who helps Ahroun cope with their anger is as much a manipulator as a Shadow Lord emissary trying to play one sept against another.

Waxing-moon manipulators use their insights into others' psyches to help them and smooth out differences between parties. Waning-moons of this archetype, however, are the sorts of Galliards who gain reputations either as skilled diplomats or consummate liars.

### *Rabble-Rouser*

The Ragabash might poke fun and the Ahroun must lead in battle, but the Galliard raises the banner high and screams the war-cry, inspiring all around her to fervor. The rabble-rouser is similar to the manipulator, but doesn't attempt to *direct* emotion so much as inspire it. Of the Galliard archetypes, the rabble-rouser is most likely to lead a pack — she can't help but call attention to herself anyway, and her personality is magnetic and infectious. This isn't always a good thing, however — a violent or brutal rabble-rouser leads a pack to similar inclinations. Rabble-rousers are bundles of energy, and are extremely proactive. This sort of Galliard will volun-



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teer her pack for dangerous duty and then get them so excited about the mission that they forget the peril.

The rabble-rouser can be an activist as well as a flag-waver, though. If she sees something within the Garou Nation that needs changing, this Galliard adopts it as her personal cause. A Silver Fang Renewalist might embody this archetype... as might a Red Talon calling for the return of the Impergium. Rabble-rousers love exciting tales, whether stories of recent victories over the Wyrm or classic legends of epic battles.

A rabble-rouser born under the waxing moon is a shining example of a warrior for Gaia. She takes her zest for life and for her cause and runs with them, drawing all around her into her whirlwind of passion. The waning-moon rabble-rouser, however, stokes the fires of Rage to a fever pitch and draws her packmates into bloody battles, where no quarter is asked or given.

### *The Artist*

Not all Galliards tell stories by literally relating tales. Just as many recite poems, sing songs, or give vent to their muse through complex howls. Some choose even more permanent forms of artistry; paintings, sculpture, even fetishes. For these Galliards, the creativity involved in telling a story outweighs the lesson contained therein (though few artists would admit they feel this way) — relating a tale is the artist's chance to shine as a performer.

"Shy" is not a word often associated with Moon-Dancers, but some artists are indeed frightened of the spotlight. It is these sorts of Galliards that compose beautiful poetry, paint or draw pictures of their pack's exploits, and otherwise create art that doesn't require the spontaneity and ability to think on one's feet that telling stories at a moot does. These Garou find great difficulty reconciling their task as keepers of heritage with their creative urges — they want to present their own work, not re-tell the same stories that their audiences have heard for decades. Others are only too happy to re-interpret the past, but they are anything but traditionalist. Maybe a tale of the Impergium would make a good performance piece? Perhaps the story of the War of Rage could best be expressed by a heavy metal song? No matter what medium the artist works in, she must put her individual stamp on all of her endeavors. Whether Bone Gnawer street musician or a Silent Strider who paints murals on walls as he travels, an artist resents being told how to do her Gaia-given task.

Waxing-moon artists are exuberant and vivacious. They often work in several different mediums and are always willing to try a new method of expression. Waning-moons, on the other hand, are typically surly and arrogant, believing that their methods are best. They embody a more "tortured artist" archetype and focus on the pain of the world as their inspiration.

## *The Prophet*

Theurges may be seers, but Galliards make the best prophets. The language of a prophecy determines the interpretation, and Galliards, of course, are masters of language. The prophet may or may not actually be a visionary. If he is, he plays his oracular abilities to the hilt, soaking up the attention befitting a modern-day Delphic. If not, he makes predictions based on the most likely (or most desirable) outcomes, couches them in the most beautiful (and vague) terms possible, and works hard to make sure his visions come true. The prophet understands the utility of Destiny — if something was fated to be, a certain amount of responsibility is lifted. After all, a werewolf *destined* to sire a metis can't really be blamed for his indiscretion, right?

Prophecy plays a large role in Garou history, and any Galliard looking into this history will find that wars have been fought and won over the interpretation of a small snippet of prognostication. Being a prophet is a dangerous game — a prophet, as someone once said, is never welcome in his own country — but some Galliards feel their calling is to the future rather than to the past. However, learning the old tales is still important, if for no other reason than a Garou's ancestors' deeds might well determine his own fate. Prophets therefore pay close attention to Garou with strong Pure Breed and connection to their ancestors — destiny expects great things of such werewolves.

As the Apocalypse approaches, prophecies appear with great regularity (which isn't uncommon to any culture with Armageddon obsessions). Garou prophets are often called upon to interpret, clarify, rephrase, doctor or even create portents and predictions, and Galliards excel at all of these applications. While the Red Talons have historically been renowned as seers, a Get preaching tales of Ragnarok or an Uktena who foresees the awakening of the Great Banes have just as strong a place in the prophet archetype.

Waxing-moon prophets attempt to bring hope to their embattled fellows, reminding them that prophecies rarely make sense until after they come to pass (meaning that even the bleakest portent might have a silver lining). Prophets born under the waning moon are doomsayers of the worst sort... but that doesn't mean their predictions don't come true.

## *The Teacher*

All of the auspices have something to teach, but the Moon-Dancers are arguably the best at it. After all, they can teach by parable and by example almost instinctively, or, if a pupil requires it, actually sit down and tutor more directly. While most cubs spend time with a Philodox, learning the Litany and other basics of Garou existence,

it's the mnemonics and riddles taught by Galliards that helps them remember these essentials.

Garou heritage is of paramount importance to the teacher. She must know what cubs of all auspices and breeds are traditionally taught and what challenges they might face so that she can better prepare them. Her lessons must be of direct, practical application — there is no time for unnecessary schooling. These Galliards might help young Garou find their own identities within their tribe and as werewolves, help them decide what sorts of rites and Gifts they wish to learn, and how to best use these abilities once granted.

The methods of teaching vary greatly, of course. A lupus Galliard might teach cubs via mock battles and play, while a homid can use Socratic methods of instruction. The subject matter, of course, is not restricted to the supernatural. A Black Fury teaching a women's self-defense course is as much a teacher as a Wendigo training cubs in the best use of the Rite of Cleansing.

A waxing-moon teacher makes sure that her students understand the lessons and their utility, and takes time with any "late bloomers" to ensure they aren't left behind. A waning-moon teacher commands a harsher classroom, so to speak, and anyone who can't appreciate her methods is left behind — if they can't handle a controlled environment, how will they cope with the real world?

## *Center Stage*

Playing a Galliard means you must be the center of attention sometimes. Some players choose the Galliard auspice for their characters precisely because it affords them time in the limelight. Some need a bit of help to rise to the challenges of playing Moon-Dancers.

## *Practical Concerns*

For those players who have never set foot on stage, the simple prospect of telling a story in front of others might be daunting. Telling stories in character is a challenge for anyone, Storyteller or player. A few simple things to keep in mind when telling stories follow.

First, speak up. Many people mumble when nervous. Enunciate and speak loudly enough that everyone at the table (or whatever) can hear you.

Keep contact with your audience. Look at the other players and the Storyteller. Making eye contact is optional (it gives some people the giggles), but don't keep your eyes downcast during the story. Likewise, keep your focus. Actors are often trained to choose a fixed point in the audience and speak to that point when delivering a soliloquy or a monologue. That might be a helpful way to keep your gaze up but not let it wander (which can make your tale seem rambling).

If you stand up to “act out” the story (which requires no Mind’s Eye Theatre rules at all, honestly) remember that your character is probably performing “in the round.” Does she sit on a rock or stump to tell the story, or does she pace around the fire, touching and otherwise interacting with her audience? It’s possible to tell an engaging story either way.

Finally, while the story doesn’t have to be rehearsed, it’s a good idea if you know where it’s going. Don’t ramble — stick to the storyline and don’t wander off on tangents (lest the elders of the septs, in the form of the Storyteller, cut your tale short).

### *The Character as the Storyteller*

While getting up in front of people to speak can be enough of a task, remembering to stay in character while doing so can be difficult. When telling stories as your character, keep the following in mind:

- **Stay in character.** This means that you know only what the character knows. Think about your character and her biases, her personal agendas, and her past experience and use that to color the telling of a story. Imagine a story about a peace rally gone bad being told by a demonstrator. How might it differ from the same story told by a riot cop?

Beyond just simple agenda, though, remember to play your character. Slip into third person occasionally and narrate any actions your character takes. Does she grab her packmates to illustrate dramatic moments? Does she dance or change shape during the tale? Are there any key phrases she uses that you might not?

- **Don’t recite.** It can be tempting, especially for players who aren’t good “on the spot,” to write out their stories ahead of time and read them aloud. Don’t do this. It’s far too easy to slip into monotone, and besides, if you can’t look at your audience, you can’t play to them. If you really feel uncomfortable about telling an improvised story, you might consider rehearsing the story ahead of time (just think of it like telling a joke or an anecdote to your friends). Or, if you really feel that your skills as a writer far outstrip your abilities as an actor, write up an account of your character telling the story and make copies for the players or email it around to the troupe so that they can read it on their own time.

- **Involve the other players.** Even if this just means that you pat them on the shoulders and say “Blood-Jaws leapt down from the cliff, screaming a war-cry and brandishing his spear,” the fact that you remember each of the other characters’ contributions to the making of the story means a lot to them. Plus, it’s very much in keeping with the Galliard’s purpose in the pack — the character is there to make them feel a part of their Garou heritage and to raise the spirits of her pack and sept. If the delivery of the story is dry and distant, the players will forget that the story is about them

(or their characters, at any rate). Another way to involve the others, of course, is to do so directly, and let them tell part of the story — “Of course, from my position on the field, I didn’t get a good look at the Black Spiral pack as Fangs-Bite-Like-Winter. Fangs, tell the assemblage, please, what did the monsters look like?”

- **Be original.** Not all Galliards tell stories “the old-fashioned way.” Some use music, poetry, graphic design, sculpture, or paint to express themselves. If you are gifted in any such area, it might be worthwhile to create a character with some similar skills, just so you can show off. And even if you’ve never put paint to canvas, you can still describe the masterwork that your character creates.

### *Pack Dynamics*

All of this is fine for the brief periods when the character is telling stories at moots, but what about the (much more frequent) occasions when the pack is out on a mission? Each of the auspices has its own unique role in the pack, and the Galliard’s can be a little tricky to understand and appreciate at first.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Galliard needs to be able to inspire the pack. This can mean working them up into a frenzy (literal or figurative) before a battle or talking them down when the situation becomes too tense. “Inspiration” doesn’t have to mean “good feelings.” The Galliard might find it necessary (or perhaps just expedient) to drive her packmates towards despair, fear, or even hatred some day, particularly if the Galliard is born under the waning moon.

How does a Galliard inspire emotion? Anecdotes are one way — the right sort of story, properly related to the task at hand, can lighten everyone’s mood, or make them deadly serious. Likewise, a Galliard who plays an easily portable instrument (like a harmonica) can provide a musical backdrop to a situation, although unless you actually play the instrument, you may need to remind folks occasionally that your character is playing a given song or type of music.

The Galliard is also often a diplomat, especially with other Garou (being a diplomat to humans when one has a high Rage is difficult, although some Galliards do manage). This means the Galliard sometimes handles introductions for the pack, even if she isn’t the pack’s alpha. This requires the Galliard to know each of her packmates by name (deed-name, at least), tribe, auspice, and rank. The player, therefore, should probably write this information down.

In fact, taking notes is a generally good habit for any player of a Galliard werewolf, simply because it’s her job to collect and relate information at the end of a mission (or, commonly, the end of a story). The Ahroun may lead the pack and the Philodox interprets the old laws, but the Galliard is the werewolf who has her hands directly in the

ongoing story that is the pack's legacy. That means that she has to dress that story up as needed, and present it for approval at a moot—which means, in turn that the Galliard has a form of control over the pack's future, since she influences how much Renown the members accrue. This can lead unscrupulous Galliards into subtle intimidation and blackmail—one extra sentence at a moot might allow a given Garou to garner enough Renown to challenge for rank, after all. This means that the Galliard is the wrong werewolf to anger. On the other hand, too much of this sort of behavior can lead the other members of the pack to take action in their own unique ways, ranging from pranks to outright challenges.

### *Quests*

Of course, not all (or even most) Galliards see their post as a means to manipulating their packmates. "Each pack will have unto itself a Quest," or so says the Prophecy of the Phoenix. Those few words are meat and drink to a Galliard. From the time she hears that part of the Prophecy and is bonded to a pack, she is constantly on the lookout for signs of her pack's quest. After all, if she can just identify what the quest entails, of course she can figure her way to the end of it (or at least the next step). The problem, of course, is that when one is looking for signs, one inevitably finds them, and pays little heed to their validity. A Galliard may construct an elaborate fantasy about her version of the pack's quest (which she may harangue her packmates with for days on end, or may keep to herself, saving the story for entry into the Silver Record) ...and then find that the pack's actual quest has nothing to do with the story she's been concocting.

When on a mission or quest, a Galliard tends to focus on the task at hand. Theurges may become distracted by spirits and riddles along the way, Full Moons are busy with the headache of leadership, but the Moon Dancers wish to see the quest (and therefore the story) brought to a successful conclusion. This function of the auspice actually ties neatly in with the Galliards' role of cheering the pack—they become the motivators, responsible for getting the pack moving again after a setback. If the pack becomes stumped by a problem, the Galliard might tell stories on an unrelated topic, just to put the pack in a better (and hopefully more creative) frame of mind.

### *Battle*

"In a fight, we are all Full Moons," a very famous Galliard once said. To a point, that's true—fang and claw are often the same regardless of auspice. However, each of the auspices also has its own role before, during, and after a fight.

Before the battle is joined, the Galliard's role is one of psychological warfare. The Gibbous Moons play their war-drums (if possible) or just yell and scream, trying to drive their packmates towards pitched battle fever... and trying to unnerve their opponents. Gifts like Call of the Wyld and Distractions aid in this sort of endeavor, as do fetishes like the Thunder Drums (see below). If the pack knows in

advance what sort of foe they'll be fighting, the Galliard often tells stories or sings songs the day before the fight meant to belittle their enemies—mocking them, exaggerating their weaknesses and generally making it seem that beating them will be no challenge. This is done partially to quell fear, and partially to pass along any tactical information that the "troops" might find useful. For example, if the pack is attacking a Hive that follows a Bane-totem of Insanity, the Galliards may admonish the troops never to make eye contact with the Black Spiral Dancers who defend it. The actual reason for this, of course, is that doing so might result in gibbering madness, but the Galliard may say something like, "The bastards are so ugly, one glance at their slimy mugs and you'll lose your lunch! Keep your eyes on their claws; that's the dangerous part, anyway."

During the battle, the Galliard acts in a supporting role. Garou are strongest when they fight as a pack, and a good Galliard is there in the thick of things, initiating pack tactics. She may begin the battle by gouging a chunk of fur from one opponent (thus setting up one of her packmates to strike the soft flesh beneath) and then leap to the aid of an ally locked in the jaws of another enemy. This kind of approach allows her to support her pack, yelling encouragement and aiding those who need it, and also to get the best view of the battlefield—multiple perspectives are necessary for telling the story later. The Galliard often winds up sacrificing personal glory for the glory of the pack—she gets a large number of "assists," yes, but very few kills. However, she also is able to laud her pack afterwards, and during the moot, even if her claws didn't pull out the enemy's heart, she is the center of attention because she gets to describe the way it all happened.

That in mind, the Galliard's task after the battle is to figure out what just happened. While it can be difficult to remember for the players, battle is a highly fluid, stressful, and confusing situation. When the smell of blood is in the air and people are dying left and right, many werewolves lose control of themselves and enter frenzy. A Galliard cannot afford to do so if she intends to tell the story later. But the Galliard has other tasks than storytelling directly after a fight. She must help the other Garou analyze what happened during the battle. What went wrong? What weaknesses in the pack's strategy came to light? What should the pack have done differently? The Galliard doesn't even have to be a tactician—if the werewolf would leave out a portion of the battle from the story because it would make a packmate look bad, the pack knows they have something to work on.

Aside from relating the tale of the battle at a moot, the Galliard occasionally has a more unpleasant task to perform. When a packmate or ally falls in battle, the Galliard is usually the Garou that enacts the Gathering for the Departed.

## *Systems*

Below are some new Gifts, rites, fetishes, and Merits and Flaws suitable for Galliard characters. At the Storyteller's discretion, of course, they might be appropriate for other auspices, but the Galliards won't let you hear the end of it.

### *New Galliard Gifts*

Galliard Gifts, as always, help reinforce their connection with their heritage. Truly exception Galliards might learn how to *create* that heritage in very direct ways.

- **Perfect Recall (Level One)** — As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Galliards often share one trait even before the Change takes them. That trait is memory. Moon-Dancers often have good heads for detail; this Gift, however, accentuates that capacity. Any Weaver-spirit can teach this Gift, which is one reason it isn't more common.

**System:** The player spends one Gnosis point. The Garou can then remember any one detail, no matter how small, from her entire life. A name she only heard once, a scent that she only smelled faintly—whatever the memory, as long as she experienced it, she can call it to mind. Note that this Gift does not provide context for the memory, but using it can lower the difficulty on related rolls (remembering a conversation the character had with his father about cars might aid in fixing an engine, for example). The Storyteller has final say over whether or not the character has ever experienced a given detail.

- **Unified Force (Level Two)** — The Galliard can bond the pack into a truly unified force, striking as one. As long as no one in the pack succumbs to frenzy, each member strikes at the same instant, and few foes can stand up to such an attack for long. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player must spend one Gnosis point for each turn in which this Gift is to be active. Every turn that she does so, each player rolls for initiative as usual, but the entire pack acts on the highest initiative rolled (so if the character's initiative totals wind up being 10, 8, 14, and 17, the entire pack acts on 17, even if the pack's alpha wound up with the 8). The entire pack must be present in the battle for this Gift to be effective, and if even one pack member frenzies, the effect is lost. Also, only pack members bonded by a totem may enjoy these benefits. All pack tactics are at -1 difficulty while this Gift is active.

- **View the Battlefield (Level Three)** — Moon Dancers are renowned for their ability to be everywhere at once during a fight. Some onlookers say that Galliards have a sort of innate sense of where they need to be during a fight, either to witness a blood feud consummated or simply to help an overwhelmed packmate. This Gift is part of the reason for these tales, and allows the Galliard

to see the entire battlefield in her mind's eye. A hawk-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Wits + Alertness. The difficulty varies based on the size of the battlefield. One large room would be difficulty 5, while a football field would be difficulty 7 and an entire forest would be difficulty 9. If the roll succeeds, the character can see the entire battlefield as if from above (and can look through ceilings and the like to view the combatants below). This makes ambushing the character nearly impossible, and allows her to know if any of her allies are in immediate danger. Even if the character's sight is somehow blocked (through use of the Gift: Shroud, for example) she still instinctively knows the exact location of her packmates. This Gift lasts for one turn per success on the initial roll.

- **Book of Years (Level Four)** — The Galliard taps into a floodgate of knowledge from her ancestors. While the amount of information thus received is overwhelming, the Garou, if she keeps her head about her, can find information on nearly any topic. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift, although certain reptilian spirits have been known to impart it as well.

**System:** The player rolls Wits + Enigmas or Ancestors (whichever is higher; the Garou need not have the Ancestors Background to learn this Gift) at a difficulty of the local Gauntlet. The character falls into a trance and is immediately immersed in a deluge of memories stretching back to the dawn of time. This flood continues until the character terminates the Gift, and the memories get older the longer she remains in the trance. For every hour the character remains under the Gift's influence, the memories stretch back roughly five centuries. For each hour that the character remains in the trance, however, the player must roll Willpower (difficulty 7) to keep the character grounded in her own time. If the roll fails, the character must either immediately terminate the trance or lose a point of temporary Willpower as the memories threaten to consume her. If the roll botches, her body disappears and reappears somewhere in the Umbra; the Legendary Realm and the Battleground are both popular choices.

While the character cannot hope to remember all or even most of the information she sees, she can attempt to search for specific moments in history. The result is a sort of vision quest; the Storyteller may choose to simply describe what the character sees or might lead the character on a quest through the memories of the Garou until she finds the information she needs.

- **Legend's Insight (Level Five)** — While any Garou with a spiritual connection to her ancestor-spirits may borrow an ancestor's wisdom from time to time, the Galliards have, unsurprisingly, perfected the process. The character may call upon her illustrious predecessors for skill or knowledge and become, for a moment, the best she can possibly be. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** Only characters with the Ancestors Background may learn this Gift. The player rolls Charisma + Ancestors (difficulty 7). For each success, the player may boost an Ability to five dots, or an Ability already at that level to six dots. Normally, “modern” Abilities such as Computers, Drive, and even Firearms are disallowed, but this is left to the Storyteller’s discretion. The player should specify what ancestor she is calling upon and what Abilities that ancestor is likely to grant her; these choices should remain consistent through subsequent uses of this Gift (that is, the same ancestor probably shouldn’t be granting Brawl, Melee, and Athletics one session and then Occult, Enigmas and Rituals the next).

- **Storyteller (Level Six)** — Rather than simply telling and retelling the stories of old, or even waiting until the events of the day become the new stories, the Galliard can change the events of the ongoing drama unfolding around her. She may add new “characters,” alter chains of events, and even change the motivations of the major participants. However, as this Gift can literally have world-altering ramifications, the handful of Garou in history that have known it have been loath to actually use it. Rumor has it that the defeat of the Storm-Eater was due partially to use of this Gift — but likewise, rumor also states that the horrific events in Russia during the past century stem from a Child of Gaia Galliard who thought that she knew the way the story would end. No one knows what sort of spirit teaches this Gift; presumably an avatar of Gaia, but since so few Garou even know of the Gift’s existence, no one can say for certain.

**System:** The player spends one *permanent* Gnosis point and explains, in as much detail as possible, the change she wants to make to the story. The Storyteller, of course, has final say, and once the “dramatic alteration” is done, the Garou has no further control. Events that she concocts can and do spiral out of control, so utmost care must be taken with the Storyteller Gift.

## Rites

Galliards are often responsible for performing Rites of Accord and Rites of Death. The following rituals are less common, but still considered important, especially by the Moon Dancers.

### Rite of the Colorless Part (Caern)

#### Level Three

A caern has its own history and heritage, regardless of the Garou that currently inhabit it. Learning the history of a caern is a fascinating undertaking, and one that can take years. However, this rite allows the Garou to experience the nuances of the caern’s development as a fever dream, the years passing in a few short moments.

To enact this rite, the ritemaster must draw up a map of the caern as it was when it was first founded (which may require some research by itself). This map is then burnt at the center of the caern. As the map burns, all Garou present growl quietly as the ritemaster recites the history of the caern. All werewolves present see the caern’s formation and any other important details in its history as though in a dream. This rite isn’t of much use for learning new history, as the information it imparts is largely expansion on what the ritemaster is already reciting, but it does grant a new appreciation for the caern and the honor of guarding it.

**System:** The player rolls Intelligence + Rituals. The difficulty begins at 9, lowered by one for each dot of Ancestors the ritemaster possesses. If the ritual is performed successfully, each participant receives an additional dot of Ancestors until the next dawn; this occurs even if the character is not normally capable of possessing this Background (as the ancestors thus contacted are former guardians of the caern rather than a given character’s personal forebears). Also, this ritual “primes” the caern; the next caern rite performed therein receives a -1 difficulty.

### Rite of the Echoing Howl (Death)

#### Level Two

When a mighty hero falls, sometimes the Gathering for the Departed is not enough. Sometimes the spot upon which her heroic blood touched the soil needs a mark, even if the mark is completely invisible in the Realm. In such an instance, a Garou may enact the Rite of the Echoing Howl. While this rite can be performed with a pack or an even larger group, it is just as often enacted by one of the fallen werewolf’s packmates.

The ritemaster stands at the exact spot at which the hero fell (even if the Garou was taken away to die elsewhere), and walks in a small circle, counterclockwise. She then steps into the Umbra and howls as loud and long as she possibly can. If the rite is successful, that howl echoes for all time, reminding anyone who steps into the Umbra that a champion was lost on that spot.

**System:** Standard roll. If the roll succeeds, anyone who can perceive spirits hears the howl faintly in the area, and anyone who actually steps sideways hears it as though the ritemaster were still standing there howling. Any Garou attempting to perform this rite for the wrong reason (such as to “mark” an area of the Umbra) assuredly loses Honor Renown, and the rite won’t work for such purposes anyway.

## Fetishes

Any Garou might use the following two fetishes, but they are most often crafted and used by Moon-Dancers.

## *Thunder Drum*

Level Two, Gnosis 6

This fetish doesn't actually have to be a drum; any easily portable musical instrument will do, as long as it can play low, threatening tones (no one has ever crafted a Thunder Banjo, for instance). The Garou beats the drum while marching into battle, unnerving his foes with its quiet, yet pervasive rhythm. The activation successes are subtracted from the initiative scores of any opponent who hears it, for the first turn of combat only. The Garou must beat the drum for at least two turns before rolling to activate the fetish.

To create a Thunder Drum, the Garou must bind a war-spirit into the instrument.

## *Monkey's Tongue*

Level Three, Gnosis 7

Despite the name, this is rarely made from a tongue (though when it is, a human tongue is commonly used). Just as often, the Garou binds a spirit associated with language — a parrot or magpie, or sometimes a Weaver-spirit — into a book or some other innocuous item. When activated, the fetish translates one language into a tongue of the Garou's choice for the rest of the scene. The fetish only works on one language at a time, so it can't simultaneously translate French and Spanish. It does, however, work both ways — the Garou appears to be speaking in

the targeted language, even if he doesn't speak a word of it. This fetish can translate human languages into the Garou tongue. No one speaking in the targeted language notices the difference; if a Garou uses this fetish to translate German into English, he hears English when others speak German, but anything speaking in German doesn't notice anything out of the ordinary.

## *Merits and Flaws*

As always, Merits and Flaws are optional Traits. Should the Storyteller choose to allow them, the following are appropriate for Galliard characters.

### *Cool in Battle (2 point Merit)*

You don't lose your head when the fur starts flying. You remain in control in combat, regardless of how chaotic things get. Add one to the character's initiative rating. If the character enters frenzy, this benefit is lost.

### *Tangential (1 point Flaw)*

No matter how hard you try, your stories tend to meander. You can't stay on topic when in discussion or when performing, unless you heavily rehearse your lines ahead of time. As a result, you are seen as long-winded and rather dull. Add two to all Expression difficulties (unless you are reciting from a script or from memorized lines), and be sure to roleplay this Flaw.





# Chapter Five: Avengers of the Sacred Mother

"Sometimes," said Petra, "what's right is not peaceful or passive. What matters is that you do not hide from the consequences. You bear what must be borne."

— Orson Scott Card, *Shadow of the Hegemon*

## *Learning to Fight*

So I hear that you killed four Banes yesterday, and now you think that you embody what it means to be an Ahroun. Foolish children! The very fact that you are still euphoric with your joy and arrogance shows me how little you understand the meaning of being an Ahroun, or what is expected of you.

Listen, cub: this then is what it means to be an Ahroun.

It is coming slowly and jaggedly back to sapience as the killing fury fades, not looking down but silently praying to Gaia in sheer desperation that the wet red mess at your feet was a fomor, and not Kinfolk. It is being hoisted upon the shoulders of your comrades as proud howls declare you a war hero for things done in the heat of instinct, actions that were all but involuntary to your nature. It is a quiet, terrifying struggle to keep the "righteous" in your righteous anger; it is learning to cope with being the mortal vessel for a violated Goddess' fury. And it never lets up, not for one second.

You think that sounds soft, cowardly? Overly influenced by homid values? The struggle is the same for the lupus, just seen from a different perspective. Wolves don't hate. They're true innocents, in that way. Oh, they stalk

prey and protect the young and even challenge the alpha, but it's all instinct. Hate is beyond them — it is the abstract and absolute loathing of a concept, the need to destroy it not to promote your own survival but simply because it is anathema, because it needs to be destroyed. Hatred requires sapience, and unlike the forever-innocent wolves, the lupus Ahroun will learn to hate the Wyrm, and this unbending malice will forever set him apart from his lupine Kin.

Hatred is at the very essence of our auspice. The Children of Gaia love to dance around this, but in the end it's just a blunt truth that we absolutely must deal with. We usually give it a preface of some kind — "righteous" anger, "justified" hatred, "controlled" malice — and in many cases these adjectives are even accurate; the Wyrm is as close a thing as you are going to find in this world to the objective definition of evil. But they dilute the meaning — because our Rage is not about qualifiers, but passion. You must understand this right now, if you intend to survive as an Ahroun: your fury is absolute, immaculate and all-consuming. There are no words in this simple homid language that can accurately describe the intensity of cosmological hatred bound into a mortal form. The pattern of your life is set by

the extent to which you can guide this anger, and the direction in which you choose to channel it.

This isn't the kind of brief rage that makes you swear or strike out or constantly lose control, mind. Many Ahroun are dangerously close to frenzy on a regular basis, but many others are not. Remember this: rage is a tool, never an excuse. Many young Ahroun are shocked by the lack of sympathy they receive from sept elders when their frenzy does irrevocable damage. Luna's fury is not a free pass from moral accountability, though it certainly qualifies as a mitigating factor in some cases. But this isn't the point: your Rage is not only on the surface. It is deep within, a long-term guiding passion in your life. It is a driving urge within your soul, an abhorrence of all that is unclean. It will give you strength when you are weak and warm you when you are cold, if you aren't afraid to use its power. True fulfillment, for us, is found only in destroying those things in this world that truly need to be destroyed, in order for life, joy and justice to prosper. Our hatred is anything but petty, and Luna has been gracious enough to give us a great gift that many homids can only dream of: She has given our existence a set, clear *purpose*.

In this bleak age, I am sometimes led to believe that the great heroes left the world, or that they never were, and all that remains now is their shells, parody-abominations birthed of dogmatic fury, self-indulgent violence and surrender to hatred. It is your duty to prove me wrong! You must do not only what your tribe expects of you, what your pack hopes for you, what tradition drives you to: you must do what Luna bequeaths you to. You must fulfill your duty, no matter how terrible the cost may be.

## *Songs of Early Days*

The first Ahroun were the first Garou — it's as simple as that. You all know the origin of our auspice, in a manner of speaking. Perhaps you have heard the tale of how Coyote tricked Gaia into giving him an extra form, and thus werecreatures were born. Surely, the Galliards have told you how Gaia entrusted to each of Her skin-changing races a sacred duty — the Corax being Her messengers, the Nuwisha Her laughter, the Mokolé Her memory, and so forth. The Garou, however, were Her protectors — Her warriors. While most auspices have an oral history describing the first Garou to act under a specific moon or a legendary hero that set the mold for the auspice, such tales are very rare for the Ahroun. We were the first, you see — every other auspice defined themselves by how they were different from us.

Now, don't take that to mean that the other Garou are not fulfilling their role as Gaia's protectors — Theurges bring us to understand what it is we fight for, Philodox keep us true to our appointed ways, Ragabash and Galliards defend the emotional and spiritual qualities that Gaia values. But we fulfill the most direct and literal interpretation of our duty, and that makes us the norm from which the others branch off. We are the most ancient auspice, and tragically it is our actions that have defined our race in the eyes of the other Fera. There are a few tribal legends that claim the Ahroun in the earliest days

## *Your Narrator*

It is not uncommon for an Athro Ahroun to brag that he has a thousand kills. It is scarcer, however, to find one who will confess such a thing, and William Bloodsong, born of the Get of Fenris, is such a being. He will go down in the legends of the Garou as a questioner of accepted truths — even though that role clearly belongs to the Ragabash, William was hardly going to let that silence him. Ragabash duties aside, Garou society has very few true dissidents in the classical sense. William deserves credit for dissenting out of honor and duty, rather than mocking tradition simply out of perversity. He obviously has very strong views on what it means to be an Ahroun, and I wanted to share those with you because I think that they hold the kernel of something meaningful.

Certainly, he is embittered, but he is also a great hero of his tribe, personally responsible for making a stand against the corruption of the Nazi Get. So I'm telling you to read what he has written, but be aware of the writer's bias and take all his cynicism, eccentricity and dark foretellings (and questioning of accepted truths, such as your righteous role as the Nation's leaders!) with a grain of salt.

Another thing — William is long dead. This treatise was written in 1949, shortly after World War II. The recent nature of the Holocaust, and William's own tribe's involvement therein, colors his outlook on his auspice and all things warlike. Ahroun are not normally introspective beings, however, and so this is one of a very few modern documents that exists to truly probe the nature, methods and psychology of the auspice from the inside.

Oh, and the people he was directing this narration at were Fostern, not cubs. Makes you glad he's dead, doesn't it?

— Three-Bark-Leaf, Ragabash Elder of the Fianna,  
Sept Leader of the Arm of Lughnasa Sept

persecuted those who wished to follow another moon-sign. Some legends describe the Uktena and Croatan as "Theurge-like" and "Philodox-like" offshoots of the Wendigo from the most ancient days, driven to form separate tribes when Winter's Children thought their less aggressive bent was heretical. Fortunately, these legends are a minority opinion, contradicted by everything up to and including the Wendigo's moniker as "Younger Brother." Still, cynic that I am, it would not surprise me if the earliest Ahroun believed their way was the only worthy one for all Garou to follow.

## *Fighters and Warriors*

All Garou are fighters, son. No two ways about it: We are a violent race, and a vicious one at that. In these days where the Wyrm is everywhere, any Garou who is truly helpless in a combat situation is dead weight — and our Nation cannot abide dead weight, not now. Some Garou fight only when they have



to, and some fight in highly unusual ways, but we all end up fighting sooner or later. And yes, son, I mean fighting physically — you can bet that every effete Glass Walker businessman, every Child of Gaia emotional healer, every wizened old Uktena shaman has had to tear apart a Bane with his bare hands at one time or another. No werewolf will ever be fully spared bloodshed, regardless of how tidy and metaphorical his preferred method of opposing the Wyrm is.

What, then, distinguishes the Full Moons? We are warriors among fighters, officers among soldiers, the heroes of the battlefield. I make no claim to place us above the other auspices in this; rather, my point is that if fighting is a necessity for all Garou, it is a devotion for the Ahroun. We're career soldiers, and we're expected to do 200% of what every other Garou does on the battlefield because it's our place. Just as the Garou fight to defend Gaia, we fight to defend the Garou — covering their escapes, leading their charges, providing the muscle behind their strategies. It's not always a glorious job — sometimes we're little more than grunts pushing the gears of a more intelligent Philodox's scheme — but we must accept that and keep our place regardless, because nobody else can do what we do as well as we do it. Now more than any other auspice, we are needed, and we cannot waver in our duty. We have the simplest job description of all the auspices, but our duty still has many different facets.

#### *Spirit Warriors*

What exactly does our auspice's most common label mean, anyway? What's the difference between a Spirit Warrior and a normal warrior? A Spirit Warrior fights for a higher cause on behalf of a spiritual liege. We are warriors in the name of Gaia, Luna, the Wyld and our pack, sept and tribal totems. In a greater sense, a Spirit Warrior is a warrior against corruption, one who fights for the purity of the spirit worlds. Now, the war for spiritual purity has many facets — Theurges address the metaphysical, Galliards the societal and interpersonal; Philodox nurture psychological strength while Ragabash bring renewal of ideas. But the role of the Spirit Warrior is physical, to destroy the enemies of purity utterly, and while there are many in this age who will tell you violence cannot be a part of lasting spiritual gains, they are quite simply lying. Someone has to excise the corrupt things from this world in order for the work of any of the other auspices to have an impact. We do that; we lead the war to drive back corruption by killing the corrupt, the

degenerate and the evil. And all of the Velvet Shadow is cleaner for our acts.

An important offshoot of this is that when Gaian Garou turn their claws against other Gaian Garou, they are betraying the meaning of being a Spirit Warrior. They are no longer fighting under the banner of the spiritual cause, the purity and freedom of the spirit worlds. Rather, they are muddled by worldly things — greed, pride, wrath; choose your favorite Deadly Sin — and have shut themselves off from the spiritual part of their heritage. They're still warriors, of course, but it's not really correct to call them Spirit Warriors when they're taking life in the name of worldly gains.

### *Executioners*

Not every Wyrm-slaying begins with a battle. Many Ahroun find themselves in situations where it is their sacred duty to kill beings that really put up no fight at all. The Galliards rarely sing tales of the Ahroun who quite literally tore apart the fomor who begged for mercy before he died, but that is a situation most Full Moons will find themselves in at one point or another. It falls to our Philodox to judge matters where good and evil are not always clear, but whether it's a ceremonial execution of a Garou traitor at a sept or the simple butchery of human lice, the actual act of carrying out their judgements usually falls to Ahroun. It seems a lot easier to cope with killing something that fights back, and more honorable, but Gaia does not always allow us that luxury. Really, how much of a struggle can the typical pampered executive put up against a pack of werewolves?

Some Ahroun specialize in taking the lives of those who have no ability to fight back. Hopefully, this isn't done out of malice or the desire for a sick ego-thrill — it's just what is most effective in the given situation, and as I find myself frequently reminding you, we are at war here. Black Fury Ahroun often hunt down those who abuse women, Glass Walkers' "hostile takeovers" of corrupt businesses can involve actual murder, and Uktena Ahroun sometimes swear to kill any outsider who intrudes on their sacred grounds as chimirage to their spirit patrons. In all these cases, the enemy is overcome with the Delirium, and "fight" is simply not an accurate word for what happens here. What can be said, except that we live with it, hopefully avoid enjoying it, and do our duty?

### *Tactician*

We aren't renowned as intellectuals, though there are more outright brilliant Ahroun than you might suspect at first glance. We can never, however, afford to be stupid — stupidity costs lives and loses wars, and that makes it a betrayal of our duty to Gaia, and as shameful a kind of weakness as any other. Yet tactics are difficult for a mind clouded by Rage, and that's a dilemma many Ahroun face. There are several simple solutions — first of all, it's a Full Moon's responsibility to be planning before a fight or other tactical action, because once the action starts it will be a lot harder to think tactically. Among the more warlike tribes, this often means avoiding the temptation to participate in the revelry that precedes a great

battle — and strangely, this is a thorn many of Gaia's greatest warriors fall prey to. The Fenrir and Fianna are particularly infamous for their rough, fatalistic and out-of-control celebrations before battle — honestly, if you step back and look at these festivities objectively, they are comparable to a caricature of a fraternity party, filled with mindless aggression, machismo and quietly laced with glory-hunting and brinkmanship. The honorable Ahroun's place before a battle is listening quietly in the elders' tent, understanding the lay of the battlefield and contributing warrior's wisdom to the planning. Sadly, many of the most renowned Get I know, revered elders of the sept, fail at this simple duty.

We are not the only tacticians of the Garou Nation. Philodox also excel in this role, but in a very different manner from us. Fortunately, it's a case of synthesis, not antithesis. We have an instinct for war that cannot be matched, and are outstanding idea-men at the planning table. We know what compromises simply cannot be made, and being leaders-by-example we always see the forest for the trees. Philodox are more objective and introspective. They take apart a strategy piece by piece, reasoning out its impact on the battlefield and looking at every possible contingency. Specifically, they are much more adept at adjusting a battle plan to account for the impact of modern technology, and knowing when not to attack or for how long to delay an attack. For all our instincts, these are areas that we tend to be blind to, just as the Philodox lack our primal understanding of war. That's why any good Garou planning table has both of our auspices — any tactic devised by one moon sign alone is simply not going to cover all the bases.

### *Survivor*

Contrary to stereotype, most Ahroun do not have a death wish. Indeed, while killing the enemy is indeed a virtue among us, many subtler victories are won simply by staying standing in the face of pain, suffering and absolute torment. Did you know that of all the auspices, Ahroun are the least likely to enter Harano? It's true — not by a huge margin, mind, but it is true. Others might joke that we can be blind or stupid, but we are also the pillars that the rest of the Garou Nation lean upon. That's what is so gravely concerning to me about our youngest ones — in many septs, they are taught that the best that they can expect is to die with glory, fangs clenched around a Bane. Forgive me for sounding like an old-timer here, but in my day a glorious death didn't win you as much Renown as it does now, more's the shame.

As Ahroun, it is one of our highest duties to survive. Galliards say that particular assignment — to endure — once belonged to the weresharks, damn weird beasties that I've heard they were. Well, we killed them, or at least drove them deep enough into the sea that we won't be exchanging emissaries any time soon. So now it falls to us not to indulge in the decadent selfishness of escaping a painful life with a glorious death, but to survive, and to demonstrate to all the Garou around us that our race can endure one more day, one more year, one more century. We are supposed to be strong, after all, and the greatest

strength is found in living, in going on and facing a terrible existence with composure and optimism. And that leads me to the next duty of the Ahroun, cub, which is...

### Inspiration

Not fancy artistic shit — that's for the Galliards. I'm talking about inspiration through action. We must not only survive, we must drive others to survive as well. In this age, a deep kind of fatalism is settling in over the Garou Nation. Who can blame us? Europe is still burning, and countless millions lie dead. The atomic fires in Japan cut wounds into the spirit worlds that may never heal. Dresden is ashes; Nanking bleeds. The Leeches are everywhere, scavenger crows picking at the remnants of human suffering. Desperate human farmers hunt wolves more fiercely than ever. Across the ocean, the Kinfolk of the Indian tribes are rotting away in internment camps disguised as schools. Human nations have been sundered, and only now has the full depth of the Wyrm's victory through the Holocaust — through simple human evil — been revealed. Caerns have fallen by the dozens, and in some cities the Umbrial sky cannot be seen, obscured by clouds of gibbering Banes. This is what we face, and it may not get much better in ten, twenty or fifty years.

Our duty comes in convincing the other Garou that victory is still a possibility. Truthfully, I'm not sure whether this falls under the realm of deception or revelation — I like to think the latter, but my own reserves of hope are not currently at their best. Still, for all that darkness shrouds the world, we Garou are still a torch casting light into the void. For all the things I am ashamed of my tribe for, I have still never known stronger, harder or more enduring people than my fellow Get. The other tribes, too, give me hope — unlike so many Garou, caught up in the myth of tribal supremacy, I know that each tribe in the Nation serves a purpose. As the Get are the Garou's Strength, so the Fangs are our Majesty, the Uktena our Insight, the Lords our Cunning, the Children our Unity, the Talons our Primal Connection. Too much long-term thinking is a vice, not a virtue. Forget about trying to gauge whether we can win the war — think about whether we can win *this* battle, right now, or whether we can simply go on living and fulfilling our duties to Gaia for one more day. The answer is a resounding yes. As Garou, we have the strength within us to be heroes; just going through the motions is not enough. It is our sacred duty to Gaia to remind our brothers of this through example, to challenge other Garou to live as well as we do.

Now, I've spoken poorly of glory-hounds, those who fight for their own ego rather than being true Spirit Warriors. But being glorious, winning the hearts and admiration of others, is a very important aspect — no, a *duty* — of our auspice, because as much as we may take praise, we give hope in return. So yes, bask in the light of your own battle prowess, be a flashy fighter, indulge your ego — do whatever it takes to make them believe they are fighting a war that can actually be won at the side of a legendary hero. If you're lucky, they might end up seeing themselves as heroes as well....

### War Leader

While the Philodox may seem most suited to the task of leadership, the simple truth is that the Garou are a warrior race and Ahroun frequently rise to the top of the pile. Certain tribes — Get of Fenris, Wendigo and Furies, in particular — traditionally place Ahroun in long-term leadership roles. In truth, our kind do not make the best overall leaders among the Garou, even if we often end up in that role. The strength of our Rage, the binding and inherent desire to fight corruption wherever it dwells and breeds, can blind us to the subtler aspects of a situation and grant a bias that makes us easy to manipulate. In truth, Ahroun can be honest and noble beings, but even the most careful and indirect of our number are still blunt weapons when compared to the social grace of a Galliard, the cunning of a Ragabash or devious insight of a Theurge.

But conditional leadership is certainly a part of our job nonetheless. It's ironic, you see — our greatest recurring sin is to claim more authority than is our due, yet we have a sacred duty to ensure that every member of our pack will obey our orders without hesitation. The key, of course, is that we're only supposed to be giving orders in military situations. Think of us like the police — we have to maintain authority or enemies will prey on the weak, yet nobody wants a police state. It is, in this old warrior's opinion at least, specifically not the duty of the Full Moons to dictate long-term policy to the Garou Nation as a whole. Garou society is simpler than human society, though, and closer to its roots. While few human politicians could fight to defend their lives, usually anyone in werewolf circles that has political power is able to back up that power with physical power. More and more these days Masters of the Challenge rely on gamecraft and tale-spinning to resolve challenges rather than battle, but the simple truism has not yet been broken by any means, and among Garou I doubt it ever will be.

What the Full Moon should be doing is maintaining her pack from the military perspective, and that does take a degree of authority to accomplish. Every auspice is a tactical asset, even if only we tend to see Garou moon-signs in that light. It's our responsibility to ensure that every member of the pack is fulfilling her tactical, as well as mystical or social, duty. A Ragabash must not only be a jester, but a scout, deceiver and agent of espionage. A Theurge must take time out from exploring the higher mysteries in order to make fetishes, bind spirits of war and ensure that the pack will have Umbrial support come the time of battle. A Philodox must not only judge laws and conduct rituals, but also tend to the discipline and psychological combat fitness of her packmates. A Galliard dare not grow so involved in mythology that she is unable to use her social skill to help her pack move easily throughout human society in times of need. The Ahroun must coordinate all this, ensuring that the diverse skills of the auspices are well applied to the craft of war when the time comes. When a tactical judgment call needs to be made *now*, and lives are on the line, *that* is when in Ahroun is justified in stepping forward and claiming the mantle of the leader.

## *Cirunt*

It's been said that faith is good, while blind faith is bad. I would say the same thing about obedience. Many Ahroun demand positions of leadership and power, seeing it as their privilege as warriors. However, the Garou Nation benefits the most, perhaps, from those who are willing to do what they are told, to provide the brute force necessary to complete some Philodox or Theurge's agenda. There is no dishonor in being a willing instrument of someone greater than yourself; and on many occasions it has been us, the Ahroun, who have brought about some great victory for the Garou, simply by doing what others decided was needed.

## *Heroes*

Yes. Say it. Roll it around on your tongue and think about what it means to you, beyond comic books and war bond posters. Most people think of heroes as being solely in the domain of fiction, not things one finds in our sorry world. But we are expected to be heroes nevertheless, to embody nobility and fight for what we believe is right. We are supposed to be an example to the Garou around us, to lead by example, to do the right thing. "Right," in this case, is often judged by a ruthlessly pragmatic standard, our war being as desperate as it is, but there is still — or at least should be — the essence of selfless sacrifice somewhere in there.

At our best, we remind those around us that "warrior" is not a dirty word, that sometimes brute force can make the world a better place — or more likely, at least slow its descent into the pit of corruption somewhat. Not so many people in this grim age believe in the existence of real heroes, but it's important that we do. I've seen real, genuine heroism — the lives of innocent people (and by that I mean both humans and wolves) preserved and made better by our auspice's valor. We must believe in the possibility of true heroism — belief makes reality, and that kind of faith (not solipsism, mind — just open-eyed faith) in ourselves separates a person prone to spasms of nihilistic violence from a Spirit Warrior.

## *Instincts and Mindset*

There are two great, comforting lies about Rage that circulate and poison Garou society: that it is uncontrollable and that it is mindless. The instincts of the Ahroun are simple and straightforward: respond to aggression in kind. You feel this in your heart, even though you do not fully understand it. We are inclined to respond to insult or corruption with anger and fury, and we often rely on our companions to temper our rasher impulses. Never underestimate the intensity of your aggressive instincts, child; part of your duty as an Ahroun is learning to control them so that those around you are safe. Rage is a tool, not a master; what you do with it is your responsibility.

Many, many Full Moons secretly like to believe Rage is beyond their ability to master. After all, many of us have at one time or another given way to frenzy and hurt or killed something that we had no right to harm. It becomes so much easier to live with these memories if we believe we had no

choice in the matter. "It was not Fangs-Of-Might who tore apart that Kin girl who called him a coward," I've heard it said, "it was his Rage. He couldn't help himself." Like Rage is some kind of external agency that acts on us from without, making us do things we'd never *really* want to do. So he bears no responsibility for his actions by virtue of frenzy — how very convenient. Of course, there are a great many Garou who do manage to control their actions regardless, which shows this way of thinking for the psychological crutch that it is.

To be fair to the individuals, Garou society does not castigate Ahroun the way it sometimes should. There might be a moderate Renown loss at most for an Ahroun who kills a human (or wolf) ally in a fit of fury, while a fellow human would face a lifetime in jail. Other Garou assume that violence is our legacy, and that we should not be held responsible for frenzy and acts of passion. In this manner, Rage stops being a burden and becomes an excuse, a justification for moral and psychological weakness. This cannot be tolerated, and the sooner the Nation's powers that be realize that murder is murder, the better off we will all be. Enough about this; on to the second lie — this one believed more commonly by those outside Garou society than within, but still a grave misunderstanding.

Our Rage is hardly mindless — it is a directed anger; it has a *purpose*. We do, shamefully, Rage upon our allies and upon the innocent on occasion, but anyone who has felt the Wyrm knows that is not the reason that Rage is given to us. Wyrm corruption evokes a skin-crawling kind of loathing in us that is very difficult to articulate in words, and that very quickly leads us to an antediluvian urge, a primal fury that burned hot when the world was still young. It is almost as if we become a vessel, a sapient shell inhabited by Gaia or Luna as these mighty goddesses strike against their hated enemies. I have no better words than these to describe what the source of our aggression feels like then these, but I would ask you to think on this: the humans have no Rage.

They lie with evil easily, compromising their ethics whenever it is necessary for their survival or prosperity. Often, this ability they have to make compromises even lets them avoid bloodshed, suffering and needless loss — I'm not insulting the humans here. But it has always horrified me, that so many of them have lost the capacity to feel true anger when they witness that which they know is wrong, is sick and evil — only acceptance and a numb kind of apathy. And so the Wyrm moves silently throughout their society, winning more converts every day. I believe the world has a desperate need of creatures who still have the ability to be moved into a killing fury by injustice and corruption, who hate the darkness in the abstract rather than just opposing it when practicality demands. All of Gaia's creatures adapt specific traits in order to fulfill the niche in which Her Natural Order places them. Our niche is the hunter, the slayer, and Gaia has given us Rage for a reason.

Now, you have to understand this. Others in Garou society are often going to view you as a brute or a warmonger, simply because of your moon-sign. In many ways, they are right. Our highest virtue is also our greatest weakness: we do not, can not,

compromise with evil. Ever. The Wyrm must be fought wherever it dwells and whenever it breeds — no other auspice holds up this tenet of the Litany as tenaciously as ours does. But our relentless aggression also makes us easy targets for manipulation:

you can be as much a scholar, a peacemaker or a thinking man as you want, and these things might even make you a better warrior — but every Garou knows that under that façade lurks the Rage of an Ahroun, and it doesn't take much taunting to bring that Rage to the surface. This simple truth gives others power over you, and that power often leads to condescension or disregard.

As soon as you get involved in

sept politics, your rivals will automatically know what button to push, and that can hurt you tremendously.

Some Ahroun try to compensate for this by embracing the ideal of civilization whole-heartedly, trying to push aside their instincts and make themselves into icily controlled master socialites and manipulators. Woe unto them, I say: Gaia has made you a simple being, and there is just one thing that you do very well indeed. When an Ahroun tries to remake himself as a complicated person, a being in truth more suited to human society than Garou, he loses something of the simplicity of purpose that Gaia granted him, the power of his aggressive instincts. The same anger that makes you some obnoxious Ragabash's bitch with a little casual button-pressing will also give you the power to tear out a Bane's throat while that Ragabash is cowering in a corner somewhere. If we are brutes, then so be it: we are what Gaia has ordained us to be, and I will not allow myself to be made to believe that anything more "complex" or "nuanced" is needed for us to be worthy creatures.

### *Ahroun across the Tribes*

Diversity is among the greatest strengths of the Garou Nation, and as any Fenrir knows we need every shred of strength we have in this age. All Gaia's warriors fight in different ways, but every one still fights under Her banner.

The enmity between the Black Furies and my own tribe is legendary, but I hope you'll trust me when I say I bear the tribe as a whole no ill will. Still, speaking as an Ahroun myself, their Full Moons terrify me. We Get have the unique ignominy of having morally stumbled very, very badly with regard to the Jewish peoples; I fear that I see many of the same danger signs in Fury Rage. They bear the terrible mix of righteous ideology, isolation from their "enemy" (I've never met a Fury that I think really understood men, beyond stereotypes and accusations) and a growing hatred and frustration — this cannot end well. Pray to Gaia for their souls, child. Sexism is a disease, and a disease cannot be fought with hatred alone. It might be comforting for many to believe there are powerful "protectors" out there ready to turn rapists and wife-beaters into pastrami, but our world is rarely that black and white, and many offend women



who do not deserve to be killed. Blood, terror and death do little to offset complex social maladies like poverty or misogyny, but they are the only things we have to fight with. I suspect Furies with less Rage have done more to better the ways of women in the world than their Ahroun have.

The Bone Gnawers give me hope on the poverty front, though. Their Full Moons make incredibly devious fighters, mixing the creativity and stealth that is usually characteristic of Ragabash with the ability to stand toe to toe and trade blows of an Ahroun. They also respect their Theurges and Philodox, and they know their place in the tribe rather than trying to run the whole show. More importantly, they bear the mantle of Rage well — the uniquely self-deprecating humor their tribe is famous for erodes ego madness before it becomes a danger. Despite their social standing, though, Gnawer Ahroun are still primal and vicious creatures, and they more than any others embody the Ahroun as the ultimate survivor. Not all are shining paragons, of course — Rage leads many of them to get involved in brutal gang violence, or to hate those who have greater financial prosperity than they. Still, they deserve a lot more admiration than they get. For a tribe that supposedly exalts strength and endurance, we Fenrir can be pretty blind when it comes to perceiving the presence of these qualities in Gnawer Ahroun, and other Garou aren't much better.

The Child of Gaia Ahroun is not nearly as much a paradox as many think. Unity brings strength to all Garou, and inter-tribal warfare is effectively a willing surrender to the Wyrm. Do not mistake peace for weakness, cub; these are warriors who are willing to defend the cause of peace unto their last breath. The real tragedy, though, is the lack of respect they receive from their fellows. I've argued against Ahroun being at the top by default, but for all we sacrifice and all we suffer in Gaia's name, we certainly don't belong at the bottom either! Warrior Children who have performed acts any other tribe would dub heroism often find their fellows distinctly cool toward them for months on end, simply because they don't have the stomach to accept that some people need to die. A shameful situation.

Fianna Ahroun shine like the sun — often gifted with great beauty and charisma, they seem like legendary heroes reborn, modern knights of a metaphorical round table. Like Lancelot, though, hubris is as often as not their undoing. Like many Fianna, they have a slightly romantic outlook on the world, but for a vessel of inhuman fury romanticism — or any distortion of realism — is a tragedy waiting to happen. Killers cannot afford the luxury of rose-tinted glasses, and far too many Fianna "heroes" seem to believe they are living in a storybook. Ego runs deeper in the Fianna than in any other tribe, and mixed with Rage it can become like a moist, ancient greenhouse — a domain ripe with rot and psychological mildew. Passions are not just entertaining playthings; they are all-consuming, moving, frequently destructive and always mercurial. The Fianna embody passion, and their Ahroun mix with that passion the physical ability to rend asunder any lesser being. That is all I will deign to say about them.

And of my own tribe, the Get of Fenris? We have fallen, oh, how gravely, but Fenris' children are strong. We have, I hope, excised Hitler's poison from all but the fringes of our tribe, and I believe that as a tribe we will never make the mistake of surrendering to hatred that way again. We still suffer the illnesses of ego madness, blind aggression and Ahroun leadership, but we have great strength as well, and now I believe we are learning the ability to temper and guide our anger. Perhaps. I pray, at least.

I am terrified, in truth; no other tribe has recently been as blinded by Rage-madness as my own. Yet we are great, as well, and though tarnished our strength is still potent. Let this be a lesson about strength, cub: weakness is not always apparent, and not all kinds of strength show themselves on the field of battle. I would hope the Fenrir are strong not only in our battle prowess, but in our ability to endure painful truths and salvage our tattered honor. Only time will tell if we may yet make atonement for our brief but unspeakable surrender to weakness, however.

Glass Walker Ahroun apply violence like a scalpel, using it as a tool in social engineering. They often serve as enforcers to the rest of their tribe, protecting criminal holdings and ensuring that the Wyrm's servants must face the Walkers on the financial terrain they prefer rather than being able to attack directly. They often end up acting as grunts and bodyguards, and my impression is that while some are happy to serve honorably others grow dissatisfied with their role in the tribe and desire a greater place in the sun. Many more individualistic Walker Ahroun shun packs and claim a particular area of their city as a protectorate, working to keep it free of Wyrm taint and protect the people who dwell therein. Noble though this intent may be, I cannot help but believe the Walkers who follow the path their elders set out for them end up doing more good for the tribe than their free-spirited cousins.

An interesting observation: when they get over their prejudices of each other as "Wyrmbringers" and "primitives" the Glass Walker and Uktene Ahroun rank up among the most effective complementary pairings the Garou Nation has to offer. Both tribes specialize in the thoughtful approach to war: hitting the enemy where it hurts, planning ahead and choosing their violent acts for long term social and spiritual impact. The combination of worldly ways and mystical insight makes for an exceptionally adept and well-rounded team, and these two tribes' Spirit Warriors work together more than most other auspices would tend to expect, going by stereotypes.

Red Talon Spirit Warriors... oh, Gaia, they have my pity and my compassion always. Homids so often assume that for all their hatred the Talons carry on an idyllic friendship with their lupine cousins. Fools — don't they understand that the Curse cuts even deeper on the lupus side than it does for homids? Talon Ahroun are filled with hatred, and coming from a lupine upbringing to which hatred is alien, they have little ability to understand, mod-

erate or control it. They are responsible for much of their tribe's negative reputation as warmongers, psychopaths and human-killers, in truth — the Talon auspices with less Rage are more like their true wolf cousins in temperament. I'm certainly not trying to justify the murder of humans, here — all I'm saying is that the typical Garou gains so much from his homid side, and without that the Talon warrior is entirely at the mercy of the terrible and alien instincts of Rage. No one who is not a Talon, I think, really understands how terrifying, entrapping and alien the world seems from their eyes. Can we blame them for snapping on occasion?

The Shadow Lords' warriors are as brutal and ruthless as the stories make them out to be, but in this age I could argue that as a virtue rather than a flaw. They also seem to possess a kind of genuine honesty the rest of their tribe lack — not that they aren't Machiavellian; I'm talking about a deeper sort of honesty here. There is a genuine ideology behind their actions, a devout belief that the weak must submit to the strong, and evil originates when the reverse occurs. They make some good points, too — so much corruption festers in homid society because good men have no ambition, bowing to weak and decadent leaders who are but a sad echo of their subjects' strength. While I'm certainly not privy to the internal affairs of the Shadow Lords, I might speculate that their warriors are often exploited by Ragabash, Theurges and other Lord auspices more likely to value duplicity over strength. Regardless, they're the Lords most likely to view those weaker than them as subjects rather than pawns, and when they do find a truly strong and competent leader, they'll defend his regency unto death. That counts for something with me, personally.

The Silent Striders are often seen as a peaceful tribe, but their ancient (and tenaciously fought!) war with the Egyptian Leeches should put that myth to rest. The Strider Ahroun's deeds are not often sung of, and they are the antithesis of the ostentatious Fianna or regal Silver Fang. Yet anonymous heroism is still heroism, and I suspect the Strider Ahroun's most glorious acts are witnessed only by the sand, and by their tribal spirits of Renown. They certainly don't brag about them at moots like every other sane Garou! I would include a word also about the truly unique and creative methods the Striders have developed for combat over the centuries. They use their movement Gifts to their best advantage, tending to be highly tactical fighters, and they choose their battles well. As messengers, suppliers, scouts and assassins these Ahroun have been facilitators to hundreds of great victories against the Wyrm, even if they publicly claim credit for very few.

The Stargazers embody the power of fury under discipline. By honing their will, they are able to channel their passion into tremendous martial feats. They control Rage perhaps better than any other Garou tribe, on average, but this does not mean that they are against its use. Just the opposite, in fact; their spiritual focus gives them a tremendous, if slow-burning, fury against that which they consider debased. Stargazers also have a tremendous respect for duty

### *Silver Fangs*

William had a lot of rather acerbic comments about the Silver Fangs in his original diatribe, including some disturbingly prophetic thoughts about Jacob Morningkill. I've cut them out because they are the one part of his spiel that is so clearly dated; William died before King Albrecht was ever born. I think a mention of the Ahroun of Ahroun is very appropriate here, because it provides a very effective counterpoint to the strange heresy William keeps putting forth that Ahroun make poor leaders. I can understand how bleak the world must have looked to him then, looking back at the Holocaust with a heart filled with inborn hatred. But Albrecht has gone forth and proven what William seems so desperate to believe: you can be filled with Rage and still be a good man at the core. I think that if William were still alive today, he would be very proud of Albrecht, and that he would also experience a kind of indescribable elation, a sense of spiritual reassurance, through his mere existence.

About the Silver Fang Spirit Warriors in the modern milieu: Albrecht has succeeded in this 'inspiration' aspect of his auspice's duties beyond his wildest aspirations. Many young Fang warriors model themselves in his image, seeing a chance to escape the crushing stasis of their elders. These Ahroun strive to be trendsetters, not followers, and often draw the ire of their elders in their desire to rebuild the image of the tribe. They're all over themselves, in truth, and the tribe as a whole is more than a little chaotic as the old is blown away to make room for the new. Much of this means coming down out of their ivory towers and interacting with the world — Albrecht's "street level" adventures inspired many other Ahroun to leave their manses and glens in search of real life and honest war-craft. Still, they're striving desperately to live up to the image of the modern hero, and in that I cannot fault them.

in general, due in part to their cultural ideas about Dharma, and as such this lends their Ahroun a greater degree of humility than those of other tribes: like Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, it is their duty to fight on behalf of the gods and spirits; they merely recognize their destiny and obey. Stargazers make thinking warriors, Ahroun who focus more upon honing their skills than questing or glory, striving to embody some of the blood, thunder and elemental power found in Indian and Chinese epics.

Uktena make precise and effective warriors. Their tribe is led quite thoroughly by their Theurges, and so their warriors don't get the same kind of press that, say, Fenrir Ahroun do. But I've had the honor to work with Uktena Spirit Warriors, and I can attest to their courage and their competence. The two words that most come to mind regarding them are "surgical strike:" they know exactly where to hit an enemy to hurt him

most, and their tribe has the best military intelligence of any I've seen. Unlike most Ahroun, Uktena take little pleasure in casual violence; Get Rage burns hot, while Uktena Rage is cold and calculated. They excel at military planning and whenever they fight, there is an objective in their minds—often seizing a mystical item or learning a potent secret.

I'm not going to speak ill of the many great Fenrir heroes I have known that waded headlong into ferocious battle, but sometimes a more directed strike at a subtler enemy is needed. Uktena and Walker Ahroun specialize in that — finding the most horrible kind of enemy, the kind that hides behind walls of bureaucracy, misdirection and hoary secrets and forcing them out of their shells to be gutted in the harsh light of day.

Their methods of training Full Moons put influence on honor, discipline and reverence of the spirits above glory-hounding, which in my eyes means they tend to produce a better breed of Ahroun than most. Fetishes are highly valued as a sign of glory by Uktena, so you can expect their bloodied warriors to carry a nice bag of extra magic tricks to augment their already flexible Gifts as well. One final note about Uktena warriors: I've noticed that a lot of them seem to have an incredible faculty for memorization; I'm not sure why, but it might have something to do with being able to read documents at a hostile site and then put them back undisturbed. But that's just speculation....

Wendigo Ahroun remind me of my own people in many ways — wild, angry, violent, macho, bloody and reveling in every minute of it. Yet, there is a greater pain there, a deep and cutting shame. I wonder how the Get would cope with losing as much as they have, our Kin herded into reservations, laden with foreign diseases, addicted to drink supplied by Wyrm agents and forcefully converted to false religions in a terrifying cultural imperium. Yes, I understand why the Wendigo are angry, why they hate my tribe, and they have my compassion for all that they have lost. I also recognize the tremendous strength they demonstrate, both in fighting the literal manifestations of the Wyrm and in enduring beneath the weight of the lot to which their human Kin have been subjected. They excel at fulfilling the inspirational duty of the Ahroun, and in wiping away that shame with pride, fortitude and traditional virtue.

But there is also a grimmer side to these cunning heroes. More so than any other tribe, they have surrendered to hatred, and in their Rage-madness some of them are killing everything their tribe is sworn to protect. How much better off might their Indian Kinfolk be if their tribe was as levelheaded as the Uktena or Shadow Lords? Their weakness is not so unlike our weakness was in our darkest hour: I remember Mother Germany as she was under the Treaty of Versailles, our children growing up in squalor so that British and French nobles could gild their houses with fine architecture. I remember what that shame felt like, how deeply the anger burned. And I will never be able to forget the mistake that anger led the Get to make. It's a cause for hope, then, when I see how many young Wendigo warriors turn away from the prejudices of their elders and work to make the tribe

a relevant and powerful part of the Garou Nation, putting aside old grievances and working toward common goals with the European Garou. It does seem that, as winter gives way to spring, each new generation of Garou, however much smaller, brings a new perspective to their tribe. Nowhere are these youthful spirits more needed than among the Wendigo.

And of course, the Black Spiral Ahroun rightfully terrify us — there is no noble spirit of competition here, no sportsmanlike love of the conflict. There is only the absolute necessity that they must be made dead, now, by any means possible. Truthfully, they strike a disturbing chord with us, just as I imagine their Ragabash do with Gaian Ragabash, their Theurges to our Theurges, and so forth. Nobody wants to fight themselves, symbolically or not. When a young Garou first meets the Spirals, they seem so alien, so horrific in their mad violence. But then, later in life, she will eventually see a Gaian Ahroun plastered with the blood of the innocent and puffed full with the joy of killing, and the crazed Spiral warriors will no longer seem so alien. That, in truth, is exactly what the Spiral Ahroun are: our darkest destiny, what we become when we surrender our duty and embrace hubris utterly. A Dancer Theurge might truly love the Wyrm — I don't know — but their Ahroun love only themselves. Without duty, without selfless devotion, all they have left is ego, and violence, and a hungry kind of hatred that will never be sated, no matter how much it is fed.

I wonder how like the modern Get the White Howlers were, all those years ago.... are you shocked that I might say that about my own tribe, cub? Be shocked.

## *Role in the Pack*

Many auspices have a complex and nuanced role to play in pack missions, but ours is dead simple: It is your duty to take the front line, to lead the charge and to shield your packmates from any physical harm. This does not mean that a packmate of a different auspice should be allowed to grow weak or infirm, but they will often be addressing other issues — banishing a hostile spirit, trying to break into a guarded complex, seeking out a fetish with mystical sight — and it's your responsibility to ensure they have the safety and the time they need to do that. When a packmate fails in battle, you as the Ahroun share her dishonor, because it is your responsibility to provide the military support and guidance she needs to ensure she does not fail.

End of story.

## *Life Cycle*

As filled with Rage as we are, many Ahroun begin their existence as werewolves with a First Change that is even more violent than normal. You hear a lot of stories about how a nascent Garou discovered her heritage tearing apart would-be muggers, rapists or SS types terrorizing her neighbors. These are the First Change stories sung at moots, because as visceral and bloody as they are, they are still the comforting type. Many Garou have it far, far worse in that department. The Change is brought on by intense stress,

terror or feelings of aggression, and human nature being what it is, that means that it is often a condescending teacher, annoying younger brother or accusing parent that bears the full brunt of the newly-fledged werewolf's Rage. Ironically, women seem more prone to this particular kind of tragedy than men — males learn very early on how much harm they can cause by lashing out physically, but human women don't have as much training in that area. Regardless, many Ahroun of both genders carry the secret of the true circumstances surrounding their First Change to their grave with them. Certainly, some Ahroun have happier beginnings than these, but blood and death are not uncommon in the opening chapter of an Ahroun's existence.

The Rite of Passage for an Ahroun varies little across the tribes — it's one tradition no one will dare to change. Ahroun come of age in a live-fire test, a visceral combat against a live Wyrm creature. The weaker tribes make sure that the Rite is "safe" — there are elders nearby to bail out the cub if he loses the fight. Other tribes are not so nurturing — my own Get, the Fianna and the Wendigo all have many stories of Rites of Passage ending in a fatality. But a lone, tiny Bane or fomor is still not a match for even an untrained Garou, and once Ahroun instincts take over, victory is the common outcome.

Stop and think about how that must feel, though; you're a typical teenager, maybe a little emotional and a bit of a loner due to the Curse, and you have just gutted another probably sapient being with your bare hands. Your face and fur are plastered with blood and other discharges, and every ounce of prior socialization you've ever had is telling you that what you just did is an atrocity — remember, you're a cub; you probably don't really understand the Wyrm. And then around you, everyone is cheering — they're busy telling you you're a hero, a paragon, a great warrior in the making. For the first time in your short life, you find real acceptance. Think about the impact of that. It explains a lot about our auspice, really.

The tragic truth is that most young Ahroun are taught to grow up as glory-hounds — more willing to die for Gaia then to live well in Her name. There tends to be a very high turnover rate among us, both naturally as we are the front-line shock troops of the Garou Nation, and unnaturally due to the haze of fatalism and despair that has crept over the Garou Nation since the Great War. As with most Garou auspices and human professions alike, youth is a time of little forethought and little introspection, but our kind sometimes exaggerate this to almost a caricature. Rashness is forgiven, particularly if it led to a victory this time. Many things that would get another Garou taken to task by the elders are ignored in an Ahroun, particularly in a purebred one who shows great prowess in his early battles. A number of quick and brutal battles with Wyrm-beasts often leads an Ahroun into middle-age before his natural time — we pass through the early Ranks with less chronological age than the other auspices; unlike Honor and especially Wisdom, Glory does not take ages of study and training to accumulate. It just takes luck, victory and a good reputation.

There comes a time in every Ahroun's life when a choice must be made, even though the vast majority never even realize it is put before them. The choice is between ego and duty, between selfish solipsism and honorable service to a higher spiritual power. The greatest temptation an Ahroun will ever face is to believe the things that make life easy to live. You've heard them all before: *As an Ahroun, the greatest share of the glory, the first kill, the best fetishes are mine by right, and it's my duty to claim them. The Bastet/Glass Walkers/Shadow Lords/Namebreakers/Jews/Metis are as much the enemy as the Wyrm is, and it's my duty to kill them. I am clearly the best leader my pack/sept/tribe could have, and thus it's my duty to claim power. The war can never possibly be won anyway, so it's my duty to die a glorious death.* Clearly, duty becomes somewhat less of a burden when you get to choose what it is. This is what differentiates being a hero from being a caricature of a hero.

Fewer Ahroun survive to be elders than any other auspice, at least among the more violent tribes. Those that do are canny and powerful veterans of a thousand battles, and suffer the additional responsibility of living without most normal checks and balances — usually, no other being in the nearby area can challenge the might of an Ahroun elder. That gives them a dangerous freedom from the consequences of their own actions, at least for the amount of time it takes to do great damage to the Nation. Those who have surrendered to ego become the tyrants of the sept, hoary old beasts living in echoes of the glory of their past deeds and using brute force to crush any who offend them. This kind of Ahroun elder isn't always obvious — sometimes he makes an excellent tactical leader, bringing his sept to victory after victory, and so they are popular and respected in the Nation overall. But once a sept has embraced the kind of dictatorship of glory this Ahroun elder offers, it grows subtly diseased, and like an Aztec temple it constantly needs new blood spilt to sustain itself. It can then only be a matter of time until all the obvious manifestation of the Wyrm nearby are destroyed, and the Ahroun begins seeing his neighboring septs less as equals and allies, and more as juicy potential conquests. Soon, Garou will turn claw and fang against Garou, and Luna will weep for the one who has betrayed his duty so gravely....

### Rose in the Sept

The Ahroun's first and foremost role in any sept is military. Young Ahroun act as the sept's shock troops, participating in raids, tactical strikes and other offensive actions on the elders' behalf. Most Full Moons have few qualms with being used in this manner, as it's the most rapid path to glory and advancement for an Ahroun. Elder Ahroun still fight on behalf of the sept, but their positions are more often defensive — right or wrong, Garou society still places more emphasis on protecting caerns than on taking the fight to the Wyrm. This is solid tactics in a conflict of poor odds, actually; gambits and risks don't tend to pay off the way the do in the movies. Glory-mad Ahroun sometimes insist on leading raiding parties even when they belong in the caern;



this can be particularly tragic, as no Warder should ever be off leading an attack and leaving her sept exposed to danger.

The two sept positions most often justly held by Ahroun are Wyrm Foe and Warder — both of these require a potent warrior and mix glory with duty, making them highly desirable to Full Moons. The post of Wyrm Foe is open to lower-ranked Ahroun and does not mean being tied to the sept, making it singularly the most coveted title among young Ahroun, and the cause of far more challenges, bitterness and politicking than it should rightly be. The Warder is a more stable position, and one worthy of a great deal of respect: a Warder is not only one of the most powerful Garou warriors in existence, he is one who has decided to put his devotion to duty above the privilege and glory of leading offensives. A Warder often leads a very slow existence, but it's a righteous one none the less.

Ahroun rarely claim the highly ritualistic sept positions such as Ritemaster, Master of the Howl or Caller of the Wyld. There are a few cases where you might see an Ahroun in an unusual position, however. Firstly, some septs so idolize war and militarism that all the significant sept titles are awarded to Full Moons by default, as no other auspice is considered worthy. Obviously, such a sept is deeply imbalanced, inept in the ways of spiritualism and tradition — but often they just don't care. There are brighter reasons to find an Ahroun in an unconventional position, however.

Sometimes an Ahroun of high Rank is as deeply devoted to Honor as Glory, and finds himself in a position where he must remain in the bounds of a reasonably safe sept every hour of every day, just in order to fulfill his duty as Warder or Guardian. These Full Moons often take on additional ritual tasks (including even the role of ritemaster) both to express their supreme devotion to the spirits and to keep themselves busy in times of peace. Other Ahrouns simply have unusual aptitudes their elders deem fit to take advantage of.

Regardless, what a sept with Ahroun in ritualistic posts lacks in formality and tradition, it frequently makes up for in the sheer sincerity of its devotions; few beings understand sacrifice and duty in the name of Gaia as an Ahroun does, and that loyalty comes across in any rites or howls they lead.

How much the Council of Elders is dominated by Full Moons depends on the sept and the tribe. I've heard that among Children of

Gaia and Stargazer septs we have little council voice at all. In the more warlike tribes, the Council is often dominated completely by Ahroun. The healthiest mix is surely somewhere in the middle, with Ahroun Councilors offering the military perspective, Theurges offering the spiritual, Ragabash challenging preconceptions and Philodox balancing it all to reach the final decision. Sadly, with modern Garou numbers that's almost never a reality. In septs where an Ahroun has wormed his way up to being sept leader, you rarely see a powerful Council of Elders moderating his power. Full Moons do not share authority well, and have a tragic tendency to crush those who stand in their way.

## *Ahroun and the Other Auspices*

Now before I start ranting about our relationship with the various other auspices, there are two important points I want to drill into your heads. First of all, Ahroun get asked for help and service by other Garou a lot more than we ask, and that's the way it should damned well be. Your packmates are going to need you—to defend them, to lead them into battle, to take point position *every single time*—and you are going to swallow it up and fulfill any reasonable request you get. Why? Because it's your duty, unfair or not. If your Theurge needs to do a rite in order to put that great swollen Bane to sleep, or your Galliard wants to tell a politically meaningful parable in a hostile sept, or your Ragabash wants to get someplace others don't want her to be and won't even tell you why—you are their shield, and it's up to you to make sure nothing hostile gets its hands, claws or tentacles on them, even if it means that you get the sucking chest wound and they get the Renown for a great victory against the Wyrm.

And that leads me into the second point: we Full Moons have got to remember that we are a fifth of the equation, not the entirety, and that the other Garou can accomplish things we can never dream of. We're simple beings, in the end, and as much as our simple solutions are often desperately needed, they do not truly solve most things, let alone everything. We hold the line against the Wyrm, and we do that with every ounce of will and vigor in our bodies, but in the end that is all we can really do. It falls to the others to purify what is already corrupt, to perceive and analyze the true and spiritual nature of our foe and to reclaim the things that once belonged to Gaia, our beloved Mother. Ahroun are catalysts to much that is proud and glorious, but no great and lasting victory against the Wyrm is won by us alone. Worse—and you may ascribe this to my cynicism if you desire, but I believe it none the less—many of the Garou Nation's greatest sins have occurred when we, the Full Moons, stepped out of our place as appointed by Gaia and tried to become the leaders, warriors, judges and spiritualists, all wrapped up in one.

Ragabash frustrate us more often than not. Our great Rage is often mistaken by the tricksters for inflated ego (and of course, many Ahroun do indeed have too high an opinion of themselves) and this makes us a prime target for their games. In Ragabash, Rage at least begins weak, barely a flicker compared to our own, and as they develop it they also gain the experience

to control it at the same pace—this means that they really have no understanding of the nature of our struggle to guide our anger responsibly and avoid letting the violence boil over and hurt those nearest us. Ragabash are circuitous beings, and many see us as easy to manipulate or toy with, given our more direct natures. Few Ahroun take great pleasure in social games, and fewer still are able to take taunting with composure. Ragabash are ordained by Gaia to challenge traditions and break out of conventions, and that can be very taxing for us to deal with, especially for Ahroun of great enough rank to be military commanders. No general wants an unknown factor running around on the battlefield intentionally acting to make the situation more chaotic and unpredictable than it already is; after all, as war leaders, we're responsible for the lives of those aroundus. Nonetheless, most Ahroun view their pack Ragabash as a valued tactical asset, valuing their stealth abilities and powerful Gifts, and seeking to use them as a means to strike against the Wyrm in indirect, unexpected ways. Further, a close friendship with a Ragabash is not a luxury every Ahroun has, but those that do claim such Garou aid them tremendously in deeply personal ways—none are better at brightening the spirit and easing the great burden our duties place on us than the Ragabash. Indeed, more than one Full Moon has been saved from the depths of Harano by his Trickster pal. Never fall into the easy mental trap of believing these Garou are useless—they are anything but.

Theurges, in the end, are the representation of everything we are fighting for. *Spirit Warriors*, remember? A lot of Theurges I've met and talked to have some pretty revolutionary ideas about what the Nation should be doing, and how we can strike truly lasting blows against our enemy. As often as not, the truly important battles in this war are symbolic rather than literal, and the Theurges are as adept on that battlefield as we are on ours—but they need our support, our manpower and political sway, and so it is most often us they end up having to convince that their approach is best. We, of course, embody the conservative to their visionary—no general wants to risk the lives of those under his command on an untested, possibly useless idea. This is, I think, a good and natural balance, as long as we remember to stop and actually listen to what our shamans are saying. Too often, Rage blinds us and we forget the critical importance of listening.

Certainly, there is tension—there always is. Many Ahroun feel the mystics and priests of the Garou Nation do not pull their full share of the weight in the war effort—I can attest from long experience that this allegation is bluntly untrue. It can also be frustrating to a war leader to have to cope with his support personnel being enigmatic about important tactical information, in order to boost the prestige of their own priesthood—don't believe the Theurges are any freer of the very homid foibles of ego and pretension than we are because of their spirit ties; they are just subtler about it.

Theurges also have the luxury of placing a much greater value on life than we do, being the Nation's appointed healers, trust-keepers and nurturers. They are the Garou most likely to be shocked or outraged at many of the more horrific

things our sacred duty demands of us — in truth, this is their problem, not ours. If a Theurge cannot understand the binding need to serve a spiritual patron with all one's heart and soul, doing whatever is asked, who can? Even those that do understand, however, often find the extremes of carnage we experience unsettling. In that regard, they aren't too alien — we ourselves are frequently disturbed by both our capacity for and the necessity of violence in our lives.

Gaia and Luna created Philodox as the personification of balance, and it's a task they fulfill very well indeed. Attentive listeners will no doubt have picked up by now on my bias against seeing Full Moons in long-term positions of leadership within the Nation. It's my bias, and I freely admit it, but on the other hand... how many of the great atrocities of the Garou Nation have Ahroun fingerprints all over them? I doubt that Theurges started the War of Rage, or Galliards were foremost promoting the Impergium. This is not to say that Ahroun are wrong or corrupt — just that we need something to balance our anger and aggression, and there is nothing better in the domain of balance than a Philodox.

In my opinion, while we are the best war-leaders of the Garou, the Philodox are ahead by miles in terms of being the best long-term political leaders. Their balance and discipline gives them the objectivity needed to make decisions, and they lack our purity of purpose — when compromise is necessary, they will make it. Philodox feel the same Rage we do, unlike the Ragabash, but it's not so strong as to be the driving force in their lives. And all their studies, their duties and their Gifts teach them integrity and level-headedness. If as an Ahroun you do end up as a sept or pack leader — and in truth we are all individuals, and many Ahroun are well suited to the role of leader — then you can have no greater asset than a Philodox adviser. Only the Philodox have the clarity of vision to tell when our Rage, our passion, has begun to cloud our vision. And the Philodox alone will tell an Ahroun this, even if doing so may cost him his life. The Philodox are like us in that they understand the weight of a sacred duty and will hold to it even under the threat of death.

Ahroun often underestimates galliards, as we of all the auspices are least likely to see the value of storytelling in the End Times. We often fight with them over issues of glory, and more than one Ahroun has been driven to fight a Galliard over how a packmate has been portrayed by the fireside. The sad truth is that many, many Ahroun are glory-hounds, and no matter how great one's deeds are a skilled Galliard can make them sound like the fumbling of a pup if given reason to. There is a reason Galliards are often called the most political of the Garou, after all. Of course, many Ahroun are egotistical as well, and will take anything less than being portrayed as the next Immaculate Hero as a mortal insult.

Which is all the more to shame, because we have so much in common with these tale-spinners. Galliards have nearly as much Rage, on average, as we do, and in these dark times that means the Garou Nation hews them into the role of "backup Ahroun" — after us, the Galliards probably clock

more hours of combat time than any other auspice, and most haven't complained yet. Their Rage, and the fact that together we compose the two auspices most driven by passion, means that Ahroun "click" with Galliards more frequently than any other auspice, forming deep friendships... or other sorts of relationships. I've heard a lot about Ahroun and Galliards breaking the Litany, and to be blunt I'm too old, and the crisis on Gaia is to great, for me to care that much. I'd guess some Ahroun find their passionate nature compelling, while to them Full Moons are like the heroes out of their legends.

Illicit activities aside, Galliards do us specifically a great and needed service: They give us the opportunity to relax. Their skill with emotions helps bring all the anguish, pain and tragedy that being a warrior and a murderer (and yes, you are — I've never met an Ahroun whom I believed had only ever killed in perfect justice) causes to the surface, excising it. They are bringers of catharsis, and we owe them more than they will ever understand for that simple service. They understand our more violent nature, and are amicable to the rough kind of relaxation that would make a more effete Theurge or disciplined Philodox uncomfortable. Galliards are also among the Nation's greatest tactical assets in this modern age — never underestimate the importance of their social (and outright manipulative!) skills in this perplexing world the apes have built. In this way, a good Galliard is like a fine sword: always keep yours well-honed, close at hand and never hesitate to apply him when he is the most effective weapon for the situation at hand.

### *Dealing with Spirits*

I've heard it said that Ahroun don't respect spirits the way Theurges do. That's a load of utter bullshit — or at least it should be, if all members of my auspice were living up to their duty. The truth is that we are the Spirit Warriors, and in the end everything we do, every cause we bleed and die for, is in the name of one spirit or another. Now clearly, we don't study spirits the way Theurges do; many of us aren't even able to talk to them. But we get our point across none the less, and as grateful as a raccoon-spirit will be to a Theurge who swears never to dress in red as chiminage for a Gift, said spirit will also likely revere the Ahroun who guts a pack of Banes terrorizing the Glen it likes to hang out in. We do have our uses to the spirit worlds.

Note that there's no talk of exchanging favors here. Ahroun don't intuitively think that way about spirits at all. Sure, it's great to have a few fire elementals watching one's back when assaulting a Spiral Hive, but we'll usually get a Theurge or Philodox to negotiate with them on our behalf instead of doing it ourselves. We serve the spirits, not the other way around, and a good Ahroun is going to tend to have a rather selfless attitude toward the spirit world, almost by instinct. Gaia and Her Brood are our cause, after all. They are the heart of our war, and no knight wants to go begging to his liege's yeomen to polish his sword or get a message to the

Outer Baronies. There's more awe, more reverence in the way a knight sees his liege — same with an Ahroun and the spirits.

Most Ahroun deal primarily with animal and elemental spirits. Because we've even less likely than the other non-Theurge auspices to devote time to learning the Gift of spirit-talk, our relations with the spirit world tend to be largely empathic — but a lot can be said without using any words at all. Sometimes an Ahroun who is not blinded by ego has the unpleasant experience of truly understanding how he looks through the eyes of a plant-spirit, or another spirit that shuns Rage. It's a deeply painful revelation, a betrayal we could never have hoped to avoid but feel guilt over none the less. So we pretend it does not matter, and avoid those spirits we know are offended by our presence.

Many other spirits are highly amicable to Rage, passion and violence, however. Ahroun tend to develop the deepest relationships with elementals and spirits of vicious, predatory animals. These things resonate with us, and we with them; many such spirits are willing to follow us into battle on the front lines for the sheer joy of doing so, which also makes them an asset to us. Friendships such as these can and often do last an Ahroun from the Rite of Passage to the grave.

### *Human Relationships*

Saying that Ahroun relations with humans are troubled would be a tremendous understatement. The Curse is in its fullest effect with us, and that makes any kind of extended relationship with human groups basically impossible. A number of tribes' Ahroun view themselves as forces acting on human society to guide and improve it — this is particularly common among Glass Walkers, Children of Gaia, Bone Gnawers and Black Furies — but in the end that's all they can be: forces that control, not friends that relate. Because of this we are the auspice that is most dependent upon our place in Garou society, and most affected by how other Garou view us. Galliards may be more socially adept in Garou circles, but we are more committed to the Garou social life because if it fails us, we have nowhere else to turn.

The one area in which Garou society cannot cover our needs is mating. We tend not to deal with long-term monogamy well — even with the Curse aside, there is still the fact that we go into battle frequently not knowing if we're coming back, and that becomes a lot harder to do when one has a spouse waiting at home. Female Ahroun find that their male spouses often want to fight at their side, but this is of course impossible. A human wife or husband is also a tactical liability, and an Ahroun cannot lead the battle charge at the same time that he is guarding the homestead. Finally, very few human women (or men) want to be in a long-term relationship with a being as volatile and outright bloodthirsty as an Ahroun. They really can't relate to us, in the end — we are a different species, for Christ's sake; why ever would we expect that they could? For all these reasons and more, finding an Ahroun in a stable romantic relationship is exceedingly uncommon. I've heard a few stories about those that supposedly made it work, but as a warrior

and a Garou I have better things to do with my time than run about trying to confirm them.

So it is that most Ahroun mating is a quick, uncommitted and filled with animalistic passion. This is not always as romantic or pleasant as it may initially sound, however. Having lived many years and seen much of how my auspice finds mates, I now come to believe this is a great source of shame for the Garou Nation. My experiences come from my own tribe, but I doubt any others are completely superior. Matings between Ahroun and Kin often fail to account for the desires of the Kin in the partnership. This is usually not explicitly rape, but it's certainly a rather callous and selfish approach to another thinking being's sexuality.

There is a certain mindset that leads many Ahroun to equate Kin women with plunder — their share of the spoils of war may not only include fetishes and the first taste of the kill, but mating rights with the prettiest (or even more disturbingly, the youngest or most virginal) Kin girls in a given sept. Women become valued not as people, not even as sources of new Garou to support the Nation, but as symbols of glory and prestige. There is a very "alpha male" psychology to the desire I've seen many Ahroun express to sire children — not for the cause of Gaia, but to spread their seed, to prove their genetic superiority by ensuring their bloodline lives on past their mortal existence. Kinfolk are just the tools they have to use to enact this formula of immortality. The problem magnifies because it is not just a few ego-mad individuals who take this attitude toward sexuality; archaic traditions and mythology of Garou culture can often be misinterpreted or twisted to support it. Kinfolk are told from day one that mating with Garou is their duty; even if they are supposed to be able to choose whether they want to sleep with an individual werewolf or not, it becomes very difficult to deny consent in the social context in which Kin live. Even if tradition were not an issue, is it even possible for a human being to give valid consent to a creature that so utterly terrifies her on an instinctive level? I sometimes fear that the power gap between human and Garou is just too great....

The most tragic note in all of this sordid business is that we really have no trouble mating in a perfectly honorable fashion if we so desire. Most Ahroun are reasonably young and in perfect physical fitness, and as much as our Rage might disquiet humans in long-term relationships, it also provides us with a powerful animalistic allure in a sexual context. So the bottom line is that we have no real trouble finding completely willing mates among healthy Kin if we put in a little effort and think about their feelings. Yet many of us force ourselves upon unwilling or reluctant humans out of lust or pride or simple disregard. In all my years I have not seen a more loathsome facet of Garou society than this one. It does put one in the mindset to understand where the Furies are coming from in their anger against men, I must admit.

A final note: mating, as nature through Gaia has defined it, is an act that takes place between a male and a

female, and thus has the capacity to produce offspring. Because of the Litany, it is not unheard of for men in my tribe, and likely in others, to find succor and companionship in each other's arms. I choose to see this as an expression of perfect platonic love and brotherly camaraderie, much as it was viewed by the ancient Greeks, but of course many rigid Philodox would disagree, calling it another form of mating and thus proscribed. Still, no metis will result from this, and in all honesty when I compare the flavor of these friendships to the feel of the "mating" that I have often seen occur between male Garou and female Kin in my long life, I find it hard not to see this kind of coupling as among the most honorable of the difficult choices an Ahroun desiring companionship has available to him.

### *The Other Side of the Coin*

William's cynicism is showing through again. There may be truth in what he says here — though the term wasn't coined yet in his age, I think the Garou equivalent of "date rape" might be disturbingly common among Full Moons. However, he neglects to fully stress the number of Ahroun who do mate with impeccable honor. A great many Ahroun are empathic enough to know whether their partners want what they want, and wise enough to let go of those that don't.

Further, I've heard Kin of both genders speaking about their mating experiences with Ahroun — while I've met some who felt bullied, abused or used, there are many others who say, in words I cannot reprint here, that the experience was quite fulfilling (the term "night of wanton pleasures" strangely comes to mind) and that they were later deeply proud to raise a child of such overall importance to the world as a young Garou is. Our society has never had the great problems with gender inequity that homids have had throughout history, perhaps due to the great physical might Garou of either gender are lent. The Litany demands that we treat our Kin with respect, and even in our final hours as a race, I believe we acquit ourselves in this far better than many other social groups would, if put under the same pressures our race is facing now.

### *In Chasing*

I can in truth summarize everything there is to being an Ahroun with a few simple words: you are a warrior and a hero, so start acting like it. It's your responsibility to carry this age into the next, to win a little more time for Gaia and hold back the onrushing corruption while our spiritualists and healers try to find a long-term solution.

Quit being selfish. Put aside your ego, make your anger righteous instead of ignominious and claim the mantle of the Spirit Warrior that was set out for you at birth.

Fulfill your duty.

## *Chronicle Notes*

Story's over — here's the out-of-character lowdown on how to work the Ahroun auspice into your chronicles best, whether you are the Storyteller for your troupe or just the player of a Full Moon character.

### *Playing the Ahroun*

Very few players need a book to tell them how to play a warrior character in a roleplaying game. Unlike shamans or lorekeepers, the warrior is something that everyone has played at one time or another, and it's a role that's hard to really do "wrong." There are, however, a few points to keep in mind:

**1. Don't hog the light.** Yes, you are Gaia's Chosen Warrior, and contrary to the in-character narration given here most Ahroun still consider themselves the leaders of the Garou. But that doesn't entitle you to boss the other players around in a domineering fashion or assume that your character is the "main" character in a story. Remember that your role is the inspiration to the pack, and part of that entails making sure that every packmate has something significant to do in an adventure. Marking the word "Ahroun" on your character sheet doesn't magically make your character more significant than her packmates.

**2. Understand the Curse.** Reread the rules for it starting at the bottom of page 191 of *Werewolf*, and then think about the impact it has on your character. If you're playing a lupus, remember that it affects wolves too. An Ahroun who spends two freebie points to raise Rage to 7 — not atypical for an Ahroun character — will as a side effect inherently terrorize 93% of humanity with her mere presence. That's going to have a huge impact on both your personality and on your background. Think about it as you design your character.

**3. Don't be a Combat Monkey.** Many Ahroun are spoiling for a fight at every opportunity, and it's perfectly valid to roleplay that... to a point. Your bloodlust should be in-character, not out-of-character; make sure you're not coming to the session just to roll dice and kill things — that's not the point of *Werewolf* at all. Make sure your character is reasonable enough not to spoil others' roleplaying experiences, as well — if the pack Galliard wants to try her social skills to trick some information out of a Pentex mook, it's really unfair both to the Galliard character and her player for your character to run up and throat him before she can speak. Rigidly "playing in character" and not compromising on "what my character would do in this situation" is not in any way a virtue if it makes the game less fun for the other players.

Similarly, make sure that your character has goals, desires and skills that don't relate strictly to combat. If you sit there looking bored and making sarcastic comments whenever there's no action, you're taking away from the game for everybody, and that's not kosher.

**4. Accept Pyrrhic victories; earn real ones.** Whether or not your character does in-character, make sure that you realize out-of-character that simply gutting Banes at random does nothing to advance the real fight to help Gaia. The real villains in *Werewolf* cannot be defeated by claws and Gifts alone, and though violence can certainly play a part in their defeat, spiritual healing or some other higher ideal is most often necessary for Gaian forces to win a true victory. Most Ahroun may not fully realize this, but it's important that players do catch on, out of character, or they will end up frustrated and embittered at the Storyteller when the plot makes it clear their many bloody battles haven't actually healed Gaia one whit.

**5. You don't need to be "cool."** Many roleplaying games encourage players to emphasize style and cinematic panache in the characters they play — *Exalted* is a good example of this genre. *Werewolf*, however, is by default not — individual chronicles may vary, but the default setting is inspired more by ancient mythology than by John Woo. Make sure you flesh out your character's motivations, background and yes, even failings, rather than worrying that he's not going to come off as enough of a hard-ass.

## *State of the War*

The nature of the conflict between the servitors of Gaia and the Wyrm impacts the Ahroun directly and constantly, more so than any other Garou. Unfortunately, the exact character of the war varies from chronicle to chronicle, and the way the Storyteller decides to present it greatly influences the life and perspective of an Ahroun character.

## *Hope and Reality*

Are the Garou truly fighting a hopeless war for Gaia, a war in which the Wyrm has already won? *Werewolf* has ominous shadings, but the game does not directly answer the question of how hopeless the struggle really is. In a truly grim game, there may be only a tiny handful of caerns left in the world and the Wyrm embodied in every corner. In this case, there is likely much less genuine effort to combat the influence and impact of the Wyrm, and more brittle adherence to the literal, outmoded tenets of Honor and Glory. Defeating the Wyrm isn't really on anybody's mind; what most Ahroun (rather selfishly) want is to rigorously follow their traditional role and die "nobly" defending Gaia.

At the other extreme, the war is still up in the air and the game exchanges nihilistic violence for modern mythology, making the Garou's cause a true struggle, with waxing and waning influence on both sides. In this case, the Ahroun need to work a lot more closely with other auspices, and are likely exploring many new strategies to turn the conflict to their advantage. While Garou are ill-equipped to face the Wyrm on many of its chosen battlefields, they are not incapable of adaptation — here, Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers are certainly not the only werewolves with influence and finesse in the human world. It's not inexcusable for a chronicle to give the Garou a chance to take back some ground from the

Wyrm, after all, and in a game where that's truly possible, the heroic aspect of the Ahroun takes center stage.

## *Chronicle Morality*

There are a lot of shades of gray in *Werewolf*, but there's also pitch-black evil, objective and tangible. The Triadic Wyrm is not a misunderstood preserver of balance; it is corruption and depravity incarnate in the world. Most Ahroun have done some very bad things, and they tend on average not to be the nicest people, but ultimately their struggle is desperately necessary. It's dead easy to turn the auspice into a caricature of intolerance by making the Wyrm into the wronged party somehow, but this loses a tremendous amount of the drama and complexity that underlies them. In *Werewolf*, the (ideal) Ahroun are not psychopaths, but warriors fighting a war that definitely needs to be fought. That doesn't mean all their actions are justified by any means — ask the Japanese about Hiroshima and "necessary wars" — but it does mean that they are most often killing stuff that really does need to be killed.

If you as Storyteller are going to make the Wyrm "less black and white" in your chronicle, it's only fair to adapt the Ahroun (and to a lesser extent, all Garou culture) accordingly. This can be particularly important in a *Vampire/Werewolf* crossover game. If you choose to cast the vampires as romantic figures and sensual nobility rather than the sucking voids of corruption, violation and immaculate selfishness that they are in *Werewolf*, it makes sense to moderate the Ahroun' attitude toward them accordingly; to do less is to insult their intelligence. Most Ahroun do not gut vampires on sight because they are religious zealots; they do so because the Leeches are in an inescapable downward spiral that is bound to consume many innocents and further wound the spirit world in the process.

## *The Source of Rage*

Garou religious orthodoxy attributes the power of their Rage to Gaia's suffering, with Luna acting as a mystical conduit allowing that anguish to be channeled to effective ends. This is a simple, yet powerful mythic principle — the Garou as the avengers of the violated Goddess, Her own anger giving them the fury they need to stand firm against their enemies. Yet the Garou have no concrete evidence to back this belief up, and there are a number of discrepancies that suggest that the orthodoxy may not be the whole of the truth. Why do plant spirits, so clearly an aspect of Gaia's abundance and fertility, shun those Garou in which Rage burns most strongly? Why does extreme Rage lead a werewolf to risk acts of great depravity? How is it that the frenzies of the Garou, increasingly likely the stronger one's Rage is, so resemble those experienced by the Leeches? Why do certain Banes such as the Ragers seem able to exert such casual influence over this aspect of werewolf nature? And if Rage is drawn from Gaia's suffering at the hands of man, how is it that it was strong enough to be a catalyst in the War of Rage long before Gaia

was seriously wounded? There is another obvious suspect as to the source of the Garou's Rage, of course: the Wyrm.

Most werewolves obviously do not like to admit that their race may be under the influence of the Wyrm in any way, but there is a strong indication that the Wyrm may play a part in the origin of Rage nonetheless. Some Uktena Ahroun believe that Luna gave the Garou dominion over fury in order to teach the Wyrm that anger does not need to be corruptive — like any power, it can be used to righteous or ignoble ends. A few Theurges put forth the heretical idea that every just and temperate use of Rage brings the Wyrm closer to sanity, to its past function as the keeper of Balance. The Ahroun of the Children of Gaia try to use fury to heal, promoting the idea that Rage is an essential and healthy part of werewolf — and human! — makeup, anger driving people to fight against corruption, degeneracy and apathy. Yet Rage does not discriminate between noble and corrupt uses — a point of Rage spent in combat is equally effective if the Garou is fighting a Bane or slaughtering a rival tribe's Kinfolk.

Whether the Storyteller wants to portray Rage primarily as a virtue, a source of corruption or both greatly colors the way the Ahroun appear, and what they experience, in her chronicle. In *Werewolf*, the ultimate metaphysical nature of Rage will likely never be revealed — it's one of the great mysteries of the World of Darkness. One thing is clear, though — just like any power, it can be used for good or ill, but using it responsibly is always an uphill struggle. This fight — to be the mortal embodiment of anger without directing it irresponsibly — is at the very center of what it means to be an Ahroun, and however pure or tainted Rage is in a given chronicle, this central idea deserves at least some air time.

## New Ahroun Gifts

The following Gifts are available to Ahroun characters as auspice Gifts if the Storyteller decides to approve them in her chronicle.

• **Empathy of Hatred (Level One)** — Using this Gift, an Ahroun can tell at a glance how strongly a given individual is ruled by anger — both at the moment and over the course of their life. An Epiphling of Rage teaches this Gift.

**System:** No roll is needed; the effect is automatic. By spending an action focusing on a person, the Ahroun can learn the permanent and temporary Rage that said person possesses. This is most useful for spirits and other shapechangers, of course, although some fomori may possess Rage as well. The Shadow Lord Gift: Aura of Confidence blocks the perception granted by this Gift completely.

• **Pack Tactics (Level One)** — While the Ahroun's role as the overall leader of Garou is questionable, there is no doubt at all who should take control of the pack during a battle. By taking the lead and coordinating pack actions, the Ahroun gifts all of her packmates with great competence in the heat of battle. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player spends a Willpower point before initiating a Pack Tactics maneuver (*Werewolf*, page 212), and divides a pool of extra dice equal to her Leadership score among everyone performing the maneuver. The dice should be divided as evenly as possible, although the player may choose where to distribute extra dice (or in case of the Ahroun's Leadership score granting fewer dice than the number of packmates involved).

• **Spiritual Wrath (Level Two)** — Garou are by nature beings half of corporeal flesh and half of spirit ephemera, living in two worlds simultaneously. By calling upon this Gift, an Ahroun manifests her spiritual nature more strongly than physical for a brief period, allowing her claws to cut through defenses they could never normally pierce. This Gift has no effect on creatures that are half spirit already, like other Garou, fomori and changelings. But any being entirely of one world, such as Banes, vampires, ghosts or animals, is vulnerable to its sting. Any spirit of war can teach this Gift..

**System:** The player spends a point of Gnosis; the difficulty to soak the damage from a single claw attack the Ahroun makes in that turn is raised to 9. Note that the usual rule of being unable to spend Rage and Gnosis in the same turn still applies.

• **Renewed Vigor (Level Two)** — By slaying a Wyrm beast (or other enemy, shameful though inter-tribal conflict may be) in a particularly spectacular fashion, the Ahroun can inspire all allies who have her in their line of sight to fight harder through her example. A hawk-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** To activate this Gift, the Ahroun must have spent at least three Rage points in that turn, and must have killed an enemy with a stroke that brought it at least three health levels below Incapacitated. The Ahroun spends a point of Willpower, and all her Garou allies gain a number of points of temporary Rage equal to her Charisma Rating. Using this Gift does not require a separate action in combat aside from the action used to kill the enemy.

• **Purity of Spirit (Level Three)** — Many Galliards relate stories describing the werewolves' weakness to silver as a kind of chimirage — the price Luna extracts from her children for the gift of Rage. Using this Gift, the werewolf can, at great cost, briefly shield himself against silver's damaging power with his own spiritual energies. A Lune teaches this Gift.

**System:** The Garou spends a number of Gnosis points, and immediately receives this many automatic successes to soak damage from silver, even if she has no dice to roll. The effect lasts for a number of turns equal to the Gnosis spent, not including the remainder of the turn in which it was activated.

The Gift does not take an action to activate, and indeed can be activated immediately if the Garou has been struck by surprise with a silver bullet or blade to help ameliorate the damage... as long as the user hasn't spent any Rage that turn,

of course. This Gift cannot be active at the same time as Luna's Armor; whichever is activated last cancels the prior Gift.

• **Touch of Rage (Level Four)** — Using this Gift, an Ahroun can channel a portion of her Rage to another, be the beneficiary Garou, human or animal. In the former case, the effect is fairly mundane, lending an ally strength in combat; in the latter, it grants an awesome and destructive quality to beings that do not normally possess such.

On a social level, this Gift can be a potent source of inspiration (and instigation) as well — while Rage is an intensely visceral and difficult-to-control quality, it also bestows the ability to feel righteous anger at corruption and injustice — a faculty many humans have lost in the quiet apathy of the World of Darkness. A fury-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The Ahroun spends one Willpower, or two if bestowing Rage on a mortal. He then expends a number of temporary Rage points, and the target gains them and may spend them normally. Once any points above the target's normal maximum Rage (zero for humans) are spent, they are gone for good barring a second use of this Gift.

This Gift cannot grant Rage to mages, ghosts or other kinds of supernatural beings that do not already possess

Rage. Spirits already have a Rage Trait, but can receive the temporary points to use to gain extra actions in combat as Garou do.

• **Aegis (Level Five)** — This Gift grants a Garou a mystical aegis protecting her from attacks. This is not a literal shield; rather, strikes simply fail to hit vital areas, bullets deflect off a belt buckle and circumstance otherwise conspires to prevent blows from landing solidly on the warrior while this ability is in effect. A wind-spirit teaches this Gift.

**System:** The player spends a point of Willpower, and the difficulty of all attack rolls made against her for the duration of the scene are increased by two. Any attack roll that scores only one success (after dodge, if applicable) against the Garou is considered to be a graze, and inflicts only bashing damage.

• **One on One (Level Six)** — The World of Darkness is a complex place, filled with intrigue, misdirection and all manner of supernatural evasion. Ahroun, however, are simpler beings, and this Gift allows them to extend their direct methods where they might not otherwise reach. The Garou says a brief prayer to Luna and the other innumerable spirits of blood, terror and vengeance in the Garou pantheon. She



is then transported instantly to a single foe of her choice, whom she may engage in one-to-one combat to the death under Luna's own aegis. The foe cannot flee (though tactical withdrawal with the specific intent of continuing the fight this scene is acceptable), nor can she receive aid from outsiders. The invoker is bound by same restrictions, of course.

Luna herself teaches this Gift, and not through an avatar—the petitioner must journey to Luna's court in the Aetherial Realm and convince the capricious goddess that her reasons for needing this power are just.

**System:** This Gift cuts through all supernatural forms of warding, concealment, contingency spells and similar precautions without any roll. For the remainder of the scene, both affected parties can receive no aid from other sources, and can only use powers that are directly physical in nature. A vampire's unearthly strength and speed or a faerie's ability to strike at enemies with the spirit of holly would remain potent, but a member of either race would be stripped of his supernatural mind-clouding and unearthly presence. Likewise, a Namebreaker might throw lightning or increase his own strength, but not teleport away or turn incorporeal to avoid the Garou's strikes utterly.

This Gift involves the direct interference of the Celestine Luna in mortal affairs, and the Storyteller should remember that a thinking being is determining the Gift's exact effects, not a defined supernatural spell. The Storyteller should make judgment calls on the Gift's effects keeping it within its intended spirit of providing a fair, open and physical fight. A Garou asking to be transported to a vampire in torpor, for example, might find the Leech awake and ready to fight....

The Garou must expend a point of permanent Gnosis to activate this Gift. Once the fight is done, normal rules of reality reassert themselves—which might be bad if the Garou has been sent to Malfeas or some other hellish domain.

## *Merits and Flaws*

The following Traits are intended for Ahroun characters. Whether other characters can select them is a matter left to the Storyteller's discretion.

### *Combat Expertise (2 point Merit)*

You've spent a great many hours in real, lethal combat and you're practiced enough that you very rarely screw up

truly badly. You may ignore one botch on an attack or dodge roll each session.

### *Diverse Fighting Style (4 point Merit)*

You have trained in a truly vast range of different methods of combat, and can apply the full extent of your knowledge to the situation at hand. You never face penalties in combat for using unfamiliar or exotic weapons, and you can easily identify any weapon or fighting style you are exposed to.

### *Infectious Courage (5 point Merit)*

While it's the duty of all Ahroun to inspire valor on the field of battle, it comes to you far more naturally than to most; even among the stout Garou, your courage and resolve is legendary. Whenever a fear-causing Gift or power is used on you, adjust the difficulty of the roll by two in your favor. If a similar ability is used on one or more of your packmates and you are in their line of sight, adjust the difficulty by one in their favor.

### *Scarred (2 point Flaw)*

The unceasing brutality of existence as an Ahroun has finally gotten under your skin. Your emotional responses of all kinds are somewhat stunted, and almost nothing really gets a rise out of you. Creepy. The difficulty of all Empathy rolls you make is increased by two; if the adjusted difficulty is above nine, you can't even attempt the roll.

### *Hubris (1-4 point Flaw)*

You are firmly convinced that your own might is superior to nearly anyone else's, that you are entitled to benefits far above your actual station and that other Garou, especially of the less combative auspices, are more nuisances than aides. This doesn't necessarily make your arrogance obvious to everybody; you might sublimate it very well, or express it in only limited ways. But your tunnel vision does leave you blind to many of the subtleties of the World of Darkness, and at the higher levels of the flaw your mentality can border on solipsism.

This Flaw is primarily intended for Storyteller characters, as it can make a character difficult to cope with in a pack and frustrating to roleplay with. A player who wants to apply it to his character should double-check with both the Storyteller and the other players first.

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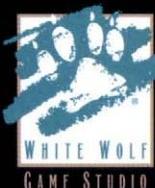
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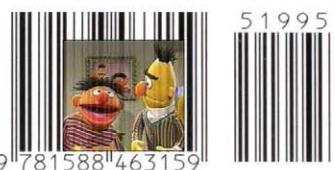
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